

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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DOCUMENT 1-446/80

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-368/80) for a decision on financial aid from the Community for the eradication of African swine fever in Sardinia

Rapporteur: Mr G. LIGIOS

By letter of 8 September 1980 the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on financial aid from the Community for the eradication of African swine fever in Sardinia.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets for its opinion.

The Committee on Agriculture appointed Mr Giosue LIGIOS rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meeting of 23 to 25 September 1980 and at the same meeting unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution.

Present : Sir Henry Plumb, chairman; Mr Früh, vice-chairman; Mr Ligios, vice-chairman and rapporteur; Mrs Barbarella, Mr Clinton, Mr Colleselli, Mr Curry, Mr Dalsass, Mr Diana, Mr Gautier, Mr Helms, Mr Hord, Mr Tolman and Mr Wettig.

The opinion of the Committee on Budgets is attached.

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The Committee on Agriculture hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on financial aid from the Community for the eradication of African swine fever in Sardinia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council¹,
- having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 1-368/80),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (Doc. 1-446/80),
- having regard to its resolution of 18 January 1980 on the campaign against African swine fever²,

1. Approves the Commission's proposal;
2. Requests that these eradication measures be extended to include the African countries from which swine fever may spread to the Community;
3. Recommends the Commission to give the greatest possible encouragement to current scientific research work so that an effective vaccine can be developed to prevent this type of epizootic disease, given the difficulties of eradicating it completely by normal health measures in regions where pigs are often reared in the wild and wild boar and other wild animals carrying the disease may contribute to its propagation;
4. Considers that the measures aimed at mass slaughter and disinfection should not be limited to the province of Nuoro, but should also be applied to all areas surrounding this administrative district in which foci of infection may occur.

¹ OJ No. C 232, 10.9.1980, p. 3

² OJ No. C 34, 11.2.1980, p. 108

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. African swine fever is a viral disease which is extremely contagious since it can be carried not only by animals but also by meat and by the waste often used in pigswill. The principal features that distinguish it from European or classical swine fever are the type of virus and the course of the disease, which in general is more severe and nearly always fatal. The virus spread from Africa, where it is always present in healthy carriers such as wild boar, reaching France via Portugal and Spain on three occasions, and also Italy.
2. At present there are focuses of infection in Spain and Malta and, as far as the Community is concerned, in Sardinia. The Community has earmarked five million EUA to support measures to combat African swine fever in Malta and throughout the Iberian peninsula, the purpose being to eradicate it from these neighbouring countries and hence to prevent it from spreading to the Community.
3. The measures taken immediately by the Italian authorities to combat the disease in Sardinia have so far succeeded in preventing it from spreading to other regions of the Community.

The measures taken with the aid of Community financing from the emergency veterinary fund (Council Decision 77/97/EEC) rapidly eliminated the outbreak in the province of Cagliari where the disease was diagnosed for the first time. In that province stockfarming structures are such that pigs and their movements could be properly supervised and as a result of effective protection the disease was prevented from spreading to the provinces of Oristano and Sassari. The same cannot be said for the province of Nuoro, where the disease seems to have taken hold and is spreading owing to the traditional system of stockfarming, which allows pigs to roam free in communal grazing areas in the forests.

4. The persistence of African swine fever in a region of the Community, even if this region is an island, is a permanent threat to all the Member States because, notwithstanding the adoption of stringent laws, the disease might be introduced accidentally on the continent by pigmeat-based products or food waste.

This grave risk prompted the Italian authorities and the Commission to consider a specific procedure for the total and definitive eradication of the disease in Sardinia. For this purpose the Italian Government requested financial aid from the Community for a five-year plan intended to eliminate the disease, to prevent its recurrence by the restructuring of pig-farming and, by means of supplementary measures,

to maintain the disease-free situation by reforming protection structures and applying measures relating to public hygiene and the environment.

5. The European Parliament, concerned by the health situation in Italy, adopted at its sitting of 18 April 1980 a resolution on the campaign against African swine fever¹, calling on the Commission to press forward with the implementation of a measure to eliminate African swine fever from the Community regions still affected.
6. The measures contained in the Commission's proposal are expected to cost sixty million EUA over five years, of which 50% will be financed by the Guidance Section of the EAGGF.
7. It is essential, however, not to harbour any illusions about the difficulties involved in eradicating this epizootic disease. While it is relatively easy to keep it under control in areas where there are large modern pig-farms, it is extremely difficult to do so in pastoral areas, where pigs are reared on pastureland and in oak forests. Furthermore, the disease has also been transmitted to wild animals such as wild boar and porcupines which, because their movements cannot be controlled, exacerbate the health problem.
8. An effective remedy would be preventive vaccination, which would give immunity even to pigs reared on pastureland. The Community should therefore give as much encouragement as possible to current scientific research work so that a vaccine that is effective against African swine fever can be developed. This would be the ideal - and the least distressing - remedy, since it would be a means of avoiding the mass slaughter of animals and the resulting serious economic damage to pig-farms - not to mention the normal and understandable psychological resistance to such a drastic solution.
9. Finally, the eradication programme should not be confined to the administrative district of the province of Nuoro. The relative ease with which the disease can spread calls for the most utmost flexibility in the application of the necessary health measures. Bureaucratic obstacles should not be allowed to prevent immediate action in areas in which focuses of infection occur, even if they are located outside the province of Nuoro.

¹ Doc. 1-626/79

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

Letter from the chairman to Sir Henry PLUMB, chairman of the Committee on Agriculture

Luxembourg, 10 October 1980

Subject: Proposal for a decision on financial aid from the Community for the eradication of African swine fever in Sardinia (Doc. 1-368/80)

Dear Mr Chairman,

The Committee on Budgets considered the abovementioned proposal at its meeting of 24/25 September 1980.

The objectives set out in this proposal for a decision are in accordance with Parliament's resolution of 18 January 1980.

A total of 30 m EUA (spread over 5 years) is to be allocated under item 8315 of the 1981 preliminary draft budget, 13.25 m EUA being earmarked for 1981. The committee can approve this expenditure, subject to the agreement of both arms of the budgetary authority under the ordinary budgetary procedure for 1981.

However, as in previous similar cases, the committee must reject the so-called 'appeal' decision by the Council pursuant to Article 8(4) of the proposal for a decision.

Yours sincerely,

Erwin LANGE

Present: Mr Lange, chairman; Mr Notenboom and Mr Spinelli, vice-chairmen; Mr Adonnino, Mr Aigner, Mr Baillot, Mrs Boserup, Mr Forth, Mrs Hoff, Mr Howell, Mr Langes, Mr Motchane, Mr Newton Dunn, Mr Orlandi, Mr Simonnet and Mr J.M. Taylor.