

European Communities

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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (doc. 342/74) for a Regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous duties under the Common Customs Tariff on a number of agricultural products

Rapporteur : Mr Ralph HOWELL

By letter of 5 November 1974 the President of 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 regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous duties under the Common Customs Tariff on a number of agricultural products.

On 11 November 1974 the President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture as the committee responsible and the Committee on External Economic Relations as the committee asked for its opinion.

The Committee on Agriculture appointed Mr Ralph Howell rapporteur on 21 November 1974.

It considered this proposal at its meeting of 28 and 29 November 1974.

At the same meeting the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement.

The following were present : Mr Houdet, Chairman; Mr Vetrone, Vice-Chairman; Mr Laban, Vice-Chairman; Mr Howell, rapporteur; Mr Brégégère, Mr Brugger, Mr Cifarelli, Mr Frehsee, Mr Früh, Mr Ligios, Mr Martens, Mr Schwabe (deputising for Mr Kavanagh), Lord St. Oswald, Mr Scott-Hopkins.

The opinion of the Committee on External Economic Relations is attached.

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A

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 Regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous duties under the Common Customs Tariff on a number of agricultural products

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. 342/74),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and the opinion of the Committee on External Economic Relations (Doc. 392/74),
1. Approves the Commission's proposal;
 2. Believes, however, that autonomous tariffs should be abolished at a suitable time for those products of which there is no significant Community production;
 3. Requests, therefore, that the autonomous tariffs for
 - dried white beans (species phaseolus), and
 - fresh and dried dates intended for the processing industry,should be abolished rather than suspended for six months;
 4. Reminds the Commission that it has been asked by Parliament on several occasions to submit a report² on the reasons for the inadequate supplies of some of the agricultural products which have been the subject of proposals from the Commission for the suspension of autonomous duties;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

¹ OJ No. C 144, 21 November 1974, p.36

² OJ No. C 49, 28 June 1973, and OJ No. C 76, 3 July 1974, p.55

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTThe purpose of the present proposal

1. The object of this proposal is the temporary reduction or suspension of CCT duties on the following agricultural products which are not produced in sufficient quantities within the Community :

- fish roes;
- dried white beans;
- dates;
- bitter or Seville oranges.

This measure is intended to ensure supplies of these products on favourable terms for the processing industries within the Community, which will otherwise find themselves deprived of the basic product or placed in a less competitive position in respect of processing industries in Third Countries.

2. A time limit of six months, from 1 January to 30 June 1975, is laid down for total or partial suspension of the duties concerned

3. The existing and proposed duties are as follows :

	<u>Existing CCT</u>	<u>National duty</u>	<u>Proposed duty</u>
Roes, fresh, chilled or frozen; roes, salted	10%	Denmark 6%	total suspension
Beans, dried, leguminous white intended for the production of canned baked beans	4.5%	U.K. 4.5%	total suspension
Dates, fresh or dried, intended for the processing industry	12%		total suspension
Bitter or Seville oranges, fresh or dried	20%		8%

Community production, requirements and imports of the products concerned

4. Community production and the requirements of Community processing industries for these products is difficult to establish, since the products concerned are very specialised and the Commission has to rely on the incomplete figures supplied by the National Administrations. Yet it is clear that there is no production within the Community of dried, white beans (type phaseolus)¹ and

¹ The large white beans produced within the Community cannot be used by the baked bean industry which requires the harder and smaller North American bean.

fresh and dried dates, and that production of fish roes and bitter or Seville oranges cover only a small part of requirements.

5. According to the Member States requesting suspension of tariffs, the picture is as follows :

	<u>Importing States concerned</u>	<u>Requirements</u> (tonnes)	<u>Imports from Community</u> (tonnes)	<u>Imports from Third States</u> (tonnes)
Frozen fish roes	Denmark	N.A. ¹	130	2,214
Salted fish roes	Denmark	N.A. ¹	-	600
Dried white beans	U.K.	82,000	-	54,000 Canada 28,000 U.S.A.
Fresh or dried dates	U.K.	N.A. ¹	-	10,000 Iran and Iraq
Bitter or Seville oranges	Germany Benelux	152.4 343	14.9 -	137.5 343

Conclusions

6. The Committee on Agriculture believes that it can approve the Commission's proposal on the basis of the explanatory statement provided.

7. It would like the Commission, however, to be more coherent in the explanatory statement provided : existing duties and import requirements are given for some products but not others.

The Commission has difficulty in providing figures of production and requirements for such specialised products as those under consideration, and the information supplied by Member States is often incomplete. Yet decisions cannot be taken in the absence of information on the situation. This consideration has significance for the more general point to be made by the Committee on Agriculture.

8. The Commission periodically proposes suspension of duties for certain agricultural products, a number of which are put forward in a regular fashion. Moreover, the processing industries in a number of Member States are almost totally dependent on supplies from Third Countries, as is the case of the baked bean industry in Britain.

¹ These figures are not available. Presumably, Denmark produces fish roes, so that the import figures cannot simply be taken to be requirements, as would be the case for dates for Britain, though sources of supply other than Iraq and Iran may exist.

Therefore, the Committee on Agriculture requests that the Commission examine the possibility of permanently abolishing duties at a suitable moment on those products of which the Community production is not significant.

Clearly, the Community should not abolish tariffs unilaterally but seek a suitable occasion, either in the course of tariff negotiations or, where products are suitable, in the framework of generalised preferences.

9. In conclusion, the Committee on Agriculture reminds the Commission that it has been asked by Parliament on several occasions to submit a report¹ on the reasons for the inadequate supplies of some of the agricultural products which have been the object of proposals from the Commission for the suspension of autonomous duties.

¹ OJ No. C 49, 28 June 1973, and OJ No. C 76, 3 July 1974, p. 55.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Letter from Mr de la MALENE Chairman of the Committee on External Economic Relations, to Mr HOUDET, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture

Brussels, 19 November 1974

Dear Mr Chairman,

On 19 November 1974 the Committee on External Economic Relations considered the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous duties under the Common Customs Tariff on a number of agricultural products.

This proposal for regulation concerns the suspension of CCT duties on certain agricultural products for which Community production is insufficient to meet demand.

Since the experts have declared themselves in favour of the suspension of CCT duties and given that Community competitiveness would be increased as a result, the proposal for a regulation under consideration would seem to merit a favourable opinion.

(sgd.) C. de la MALENE

The following were present: Mr de la Malene (Chairman); Mr Boano, Mr Fellermaier, Mr Thomsen (Vice-Chairmen); Mr Bourdelles, Mr Brewis, Mr de Clercq, Mr Couste, Mr D'Angelosante, Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, Mr Kaspereit, Mr Kavanagh, Mr Klepsch, Mr de Koning, Mr Maigaard, Mr E. Muller, Mr Pisoni, Lord St. Oswald, Mr Thornley.

