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Working Documents

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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. 185/75) for a regulation amending Regulation (EEC) N^o 657/75 on the/standard quality for colza and rape seed

Rapporteur: Mr J. de KONING

PE 41.585/fin.

By letter of 4 July 1975 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 amending Regulation (EEC) No 657/75 on the standard quality for colza and rape seed.

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 De Koning rapporteur on 9 July 1975.

It considered this proposal at its meeting of 16 and 17 September 1975.

At the same meeting the committee adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement by 8 votes in favour, with 8 abstentions.

The following were present: Mr Houdet, chairman; Mr Vetrone and Mr Laban, vice-chairmen; Mr De Koning, rapporteur; Mr Boano, Mr Bourdellès, Mr Della Briotta, Mrs Dunwoody, Mr Frehsee, Mr Hughes, Mr Kofoed, Mr Liogier, Mr Martens, Mr Scott-Hopkins, Lord Walston and Mr Zeller.

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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 amending Regulation (EEC) No. 657/75 on the standard quality for colza and rape seed.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council ¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 185/75),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 259/75),
1. Draws attention to the desirability for the consumer of encouraging the production of new varieties of colza seed and of testing these new varieties to eliminate or detect in good time possible risks to producers;
 2. Draws attention to the difficulties created for producers by the timing of the decision, namely shortly before the sowing of colza seed, while the European list of varieties still does not include any varieties with a low erucic acid content; therefore requests the Commission, in determining the intervention conditions for the 1976/77 marketing year, to include colza seed with an erucic acid content of 15% or more in the intervention arrangements, provided that a guarantee is given that such seed will not be used for human consumption;
 3. Approves the Commission's proposal, subject to the above observations.

¹ OJ No. C 150, 5.7.1975, p.6

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. When the agricultural prices were adopted for the 1975/1976 marketing year, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution requesting the Commission to propose measures to promote the use of colza varieties with a low erucic acid content where colza oil is used in food.

An opinion of the Scientific Committee for Food had recommended that preference should be given to the cultivation of varieties with low levels of long-chain fatty acids. Although research in that area is not complete, it is considered probable that the erucic acids contained in colza and rape seeds could have harmful effects on human health. In the traditional varieties of colza and rape seeds, the erucic acid percentage is relatively high, so that efforts are now being directed at conversion from the traditional varieties to new varieties with a lower erucic acid content.

The Commission therefore submitted to the Council a proposal for a directive fixing the maximum level of erucic acid in fats and oils and margarine for food. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment is the committee responsible for reporting on that proposal.

2. A proposal for a regulation incorporating amendments on the standard quality for colza and rape seed was referred to the Committee on Agriculture.

The change consists in reducing the oil content of the standard quality from 42% to 40%, since the new colza varieties have a lower oil content. The effect of this on producers' incomes was seen by the Commission as sufficient reason for changing the standard quality specification.

This means that the prices fixed by the Council for the marketing year 1975/1976 become applicable to a standard quality of colza and rape seed with a somewhat lower oil content, and the change in the subsidy calculation mechanism has the effect of raising aid to producers of all types of colza and rape seed by about 0.362 u.a. per 100 kg. If that makes the target price higher than the world market price for seed produced and processed within the Community, a right to a higher subsidy arises.

3. To avoid producers of colza and rape seed with a high erucic acid content being the main ones to benefit from the higher aid, the Commission wishes to adopt, through the Management Committee for Oils and Fats, measures so that colza seed with an oil content between 40% and 42% in intervention would receive no increase.

4. The Committee on Agriculture agrees with the effort to encourage the use of the new colza varieties.

This may bring about an increase in demand for colza, strengthening the producers' position in the long term.

It also considers it important for adverse effects on producer incomes through this change-over to new varieties to be compensated, especially since a large number of producers have changed to the new varieties voluntarily. The change-over is in full swing and, particularly in France, cultivation of the new PRIMOR variety is well advanced.

The committee considers that close consideration should be given to how the change-over can be achieved without causing one-sided advantages to a particular group of producers.

The Committee on Agriculture draws attention to the necessity of treating producers of all types of colza and rape seed as equally as possible.

From a communication from the Commission to the Council concerning the problems presented by the presence of erucic acid in colza seeds, it appears that it is difficult to differentiate aid according to the erucic acid content. The same is true of a system which would give aid only to producers of the new varieties.

Although the use of the new varieties will make possible a rise in colza oil consumption in the future, the Commission ought to ensure that producers of the traditional varieties, for which there is still a demand, do not suffer from the change-over. On the other hand, producers using the new varieties are faced with extra problems in applying new techniques. The Commission is aware of this problem. It has, moreover, been found that the new varieties have so far recorded a lower yield per hectare. It seems that this should not be attributed entirely to the new varieties, but also to factors such as weather conditions and the introduction of new techniques. There is as yet no certainty regarding the real cause of the lower yield per hectare.

5. Your committee draws attention to the need to test the new varieties of colza seed on which sufficient experience has not as yet been acquired, in order to ensure that possible disadvantages arising for producers from the use of these new varieties can be detected and prevented in good time. It should be noted in this connection that the list of varieties has not yet been extended to include the new strains. The Commission should also closely follow the yield of the new varieties.

The Committee on Agriculture also has objections to the Commission's proposal to exclude colza seed with an erucic acid content in excess of 15% from the intervention arrangements from the 1976/77 marketing year onwards, in view of the fact that this measure is being taken only a short time before the sowing of colza seed.

The committee considers it preferable to postpone this measure for one year and to include colza seed varieties with a high erucic acid content in the intervention measures for the 1976/77 marketing year so that producers of the traditional varieties can if necessary fall back on the protection of a guaranteed price. It should, however, be stipulated that these colza seed varieties with a high erucic acid content must not be used for human consumption.

Subject to these critical comments the Committee on Agriculture is able to approve the proposed regulation.