

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(80) 678 final

Brussels, 7 November 1980

Recommendation for a  
COUNCIL DECISION  
concerning the amendment of tariff concessions concerning certain  
cheeses

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(submitted to the Council by the Commission)

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# EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. During the renegotiations under Article XXVIII of the GATT, which took place between 1966 and 1968 with Switzerland, Finland and Austria, the Community granted certain concessions to those countries, namely:
  - (i) binding under GATT of ceilings on import levies on Emmentaler, Gruyère, Sbrinz, Appenzell and Bergkäse cheeses. Different ceilings were applied to the levies on those products according to the presentation of the products (whole cheeses, pieces packed in vacuum) and the prices to be observed on importation into the Community. In addition, a clause on the automatic adjustment of these prices was agreed ;
  - (ii) "autonomous" fixing of an upper limit in respect of Switzerland, Austria and Finland (by exchange of letters) for the levy charged at the frontier on certain processed cheeses for which a minimum price must be observed .
2. Since their entry into force, these concessions have remained unchanged, apart from the automatic adjustment of import prices for Emmentaler cheese.
3. The trend of imports of the products in question into the Community shows, in the case of Emmentaler cheeses, that total Community imports have stabilized at around 51 000 to 55 000 tonnes, though imports from Austria have been falling steadily since 1976. In the case of processed cheeses, imports from Switzerland have stayed at around 3 600 tonnes since 1974, whilst imports from Austria and to a lesser extent from Finland have risen substantially (see Annex I).
4. At the recent Multilateral Trade Negotiations (Tokyo Round), certain EFTA countries (Switzerland, Austria, Finland, Norway) requested concessions in respect of agricultural products, notably cheese.

It was agreed with those countries that no negotiations would be undertaken in the context of the MTN but that their requests would be examined subsequently on a bilateral and reciprocal basis.

5. Since the completion of the MTN, Switzerland, Finland, Austria and Norway have reiterated their requests concerning cheese, pointing out that other non-Community countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand had obtained concessions in this sector whilst they themselves had been excluded from such negotiations. Their main requests are for an adjustment of the GATT Emmentaler concessions (Switzerland, Finland, Austria) and the inclusion of Jarlsberg cheese in this concession (Norway).

These countries also indicated that they would be willing to give undertakings (on imports as well as exports to the EEC) if the Community agreed to meet all or some of their requests.

6. The Commission suggests that the Community should agree to the request from these countries to open negotiations, both for the reasons given above and also because the EEC has requests of its own to make to the EFTA countries concerning the cheese sector.
7. The Commission accordingly recommends the Council, under Article 113(3) of the EEC Treaty, to authorize it to open negotiations, on a reciprocal basis, with Switzerland, Finland, Austria and Norway, with a view to amending the tariff concessions granted on both sides in the cheese sector. The Article 113 committee will assist the Commission in the conduct of the negotiations.

The Commission's recommendation for a Council Decision is attached as Annex II.

ANNEX 1 (a)

EEC IMPORTS OF PROCESSED CHEESE - 1975 to 1979

b = bound/nb = non-bound

tonnes

	1975		1976		1977		1978		1979	
	b	nb	b	nb	b	nb	b	nb	b	nb
From Finland	4 110	-	5 073	47	3 149	530	6 545	249	6 227	220
Switzerland	39 016	193	38 331	28	44 397	94	40 638	157	41 971	340
Austria	7 880	633	8 815	508	7 746	655	7 636	220	7 009	103
Total	51 006	826	52 719	583	55 292	1 279	54 869	626	55 287	663
GRAND TOTAL OF										
IMPORTS	51 026	833	52 756	604	55 293	1 311	54 946	677	55 294	820

Source: Nimex

EEC IMPORTS OF PROCESSED CHEESE - 1975 to 1979

tonnes

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
From Finland	-	90	141	173	215
Switzerland	3 174	3 703	3 857	3 470	3 613
Austria	951	1 997	2 694	3 218	4 613
Total	4 125	5 790	6 692	6 861	8 441
GRAND TOTAL OF					
IMPORTS	4 284	5 981	6 851	7 177	9 489

Source: Nimexe

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 113 thereof,

Having regard to the Recommendation from the Commission,

Whereas, during the negotiations held between 1966 and 1968 with Switzerland, Finland and Austria under Article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the Community granted concessions to those countries;

Whereas these countries have requested that those concessions be amended and whereas it would appear appropriate to accede to certain of those requests subject to a condition of reciprocity;

Whereas the Community has certain requests to make to those countries concerning the same product sector;

Whereas negotiations should therefore be opened on a reciprocal basis with Switzerland, Finland, Austria and Norway in respect of the cheese sector,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS :

Sole Article

The Commission is hereby authorized to open negotiations on a reciprocal basis with Switzerland, Finland, Austria and Norway with a view to amending the tariff concessions granted on both sides in the cheese sector.

