



COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT



PRESS RELEASE

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1683rd Council meeting

AGRICULTURE

Brussels, 21 September 1993

President: Mr André BOURGEOIS,

Minister for Agriculture of the
Kingdom of Belgium

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr André BOURGEOIS Minister for Agriculture

Denmark:

Mr Bjørn WESTH Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries
Mr Nils BERNSTEIN State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Germany:

Mr Jochen BORCHERT Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry
Mr Franz-Josef FEITER State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry

Greece:

Mr Evangelos BASSIAKOS State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Spain:

Mr Vicente ALBERO SILLA Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

France:

Mr Jean PUECH Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

Ireland:

Mr Michael DOWLING Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Italy:

Mr Alfredo DIANA Minister for the co-ordination of agricultural, food and forestry policies

Luxembourg:

Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development

Netherlands:

Mr Piet BUKMAN Minister for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries

Portugal:

Mr Arlindo CUNHA Minister for Agriculture

United Kingdom:

Mrs Gillian SHEPHARD Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Mr Ian LANG Secretary of State for Scotland

Commission

Mr René STEICHEN Member

AGRI-MONETARY SECTOR

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council discussed in depth the agri-monetary situation following the decision taken on 2 August 1993 by the Ministers for Finance and the governors of the central banks to widen the fluctuation ranges in the EMS.

It took note of all the observations made by the Member States.

In the light of that discussion it invited the Commission to submit, before the next Council meeting on agriculture, a proposal for the agri-monetary system to be applied following the decision of 2 August.

In that context it stressed the need to take account of all relevant factors, including budgetary ones.

Meanwhile the Council noted the Commission's intention of taking appropriate steps to suspend any change in agricultural conversion rates, while ensuring that any deflection of trade was avoided."

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The Council saw no need at this stage to examine the Commission proposal laying down the arrangements for implementing the agri-monetary compensatory aid decided on by the Council in December 1992.

SUPPLY OF MILK TO SCHOOLCHILDREN

The Council discussed the Commission proposal concerned which, following discontinuation of the "normal" co-responsibility levy on milk, is designed to reduce the amount of Community aid given for the school milk scheme. The proposal seeks to cut this aid, which up to now has been largely financed from that levy, from 125% to 62,5% of the guide price for milk.

At the close of its debate the Council, acting by a qualified majority (the German and Portuguese delegations wanted to keep the aid at its current level and voted against), agreed to a compromise text alleviating the adverse impact of the original proposal by setting the level of aid at 95% of the guide price for milk. The Community aid is not to be reduced before the end of 1993.

The Commission will make the necessary technical adjustments under the powers vested in it.

The Regulation will be formally adopted shortly, once the relevant texts have been finalized.

DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE OF WINE-SECTOR POLICY

The Council held a wide-ranging exchange of views on the Commission communication concerning the development and future of wine-sector policy. The Commission discussion paper in question sets out guidelines for future wine-sector reform further to the undertaking given by the Commission during discussion of the 1993/1994 prices package to make a thorough analysis of the present situation and likely trends in this sector.

Delegations endorsed the Commission's analysis of the situation and the view that the wine-sector CMO needed a comprehensive overhaul in order to balance this market in the medium term; they gave their opinions on the broad range of measures which the Commission advocated for achieving this goal.

In conclusion, the Presidency asked the Commission to submit its formal proposals in this area at an early date.

SUPPORT FOR PRODUCERS OF CERTAIN ARABLE CROPS (SET-ASIDE)

Pending the European Parliament's Opinion, the Council held a preliminary exchange of views on the Commission proposal which seeks to introduce more flexibility into the rules adopted as part of the arable crops reform. The proposal follows up the review of the reform of the arable crops arrangements carried out in the course of fixing the 1993/1994 prices and the Commission's discussion paper on possible changes in its set-aside policy.

The proposal provides in particular for measures to:

- introduce greater flexibility in regionalization plans (whilst ensuring that historic average national yields are reflected);
- refashion the set-aside conditions by providing for:
 - = an increase in the compensation from ECU 45 to ECU 57 per tonne;
 - = the possibility of 3-year rotation;
 - = authorization to combine rotational and fixed set-aside, with entitlement to an extra five percentage points;
 - = relaxation of the transfer rules;
 - = extension of the possibilities for using land set aside;
 - = the possibility of granting compensation for set-aside in excess of the compulsory minimum;
- allow, in certain cases, for exceptions to Article 9 in order to cover specific situations (e.g. regrouping) without, however, calling into question the principle behind this Article that land which was under permanent pasture, permanent crops or trees or was used for non-agricultural purposes until 31 December 1991 does not qualify for compensation.

At the close of its debate on this complex technical dossier, the Council instructed the Special Committee on Agriculture to expedite its work on this matter so that the Council would be able to take a decision once it received the European Parliament's Opinion.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON OILSEEDS

Pending the European Parliament's Opinion, the Council held a preliminary exchange of views on the Commission proposal concerned, which follows on from the formal approval by the Council last June of the Memorandum of Understanding on Oilseeds between the Community and the United States concluded on 3 December 1992.

The proposal seeks to adjust current Community oilseeds rules to make them compatible with the European Community/United States agreement. It includes a formula for spreading the penalty if the base area (5 128 000 ha) set for the Community by the Understanding is exceeded. Under the proposal, the penalty would be spread Community-wide if the overall excess were not greater than 5%. In the event of an overshoot exceeding this percentage, the burden would be borne by producers in the Member States with the highest increase in area under oilseeds.

Closing its debate - which revealed a need for more thorough discussion - the Council instructed the Special Committee on Agriculture to continue examining the matter.

FURTHER DECISIONS RELATING TO AGRICULTURE

Imports of wine from Hungary

The Council adopted the Regulation amending Regulation No 3677/89 in regard to the total alcoholic strength by volume of certain quality wines imported from Hungary.

The purpose of the amendment is to extend by one year, until 31 August 1994, the waiver granted for certain Hungarian quality wines with regard to their total alcoholic strength, which is above the 15% total strength by volume normally allowed under Community rules. The extension is being granted pending conclusion of the overall agreement in the wine sector, on which discussions between the Community and Hungary are at an advanced stage.

Special report No 4/93 of the Court of Auditors

The Council took note of Special report No 4/93 of the Court of Auditors on the implementation of the quota system intended to control milk production, accompanied by the Commission's replies.

Fees for health inspections and controls of fresh meat

The Council adopted by a qualified majority (the French delegation having voted against) the Decision deferring until 31 December 1993 the deadline laid down in Decision 88/408/EEC, inter alia for applying the standard fee for poultrymeat to be charged when carrying out health inspections and controls of fresh meat. The extension is intended to enable an in-depth study to be made of all the arrangements relating to fees with a view to a decision on the future regime.

Fruit juices and similar products

Following the European Parliament's approval of its common position, the Council finally adopted the Directive relating to juices and certain similar products. That Directive is a consolidated version of Directive 75/726/EEC and subsequent amendments thereto.

This consolidation is designed to simplify the whole body of Community legislation already in force in this area and to make it more understandable to both consumers and business.

More specifically, the Directive provides that Member States must take all measures necessary to ensure that the products can be marketed only if they conform to the Directive's rules. These rules cover, inter alia, substances, treatments, processes, additives and descriptions authorized in the manufacture of each type of fruit juice.

Marketing standards for eggs

Acting by a qualified majority (the United Kingdom delegation having voted against), the Council adopted the Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No 1907/90 on certain marketing standards for eggs. The aim is to replace the indication of the packaging date by the recommended limit date for consumption and also to provide for the possibility of advertizing on egg packs.

MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONS

Importation of Mediterranean products

The Council adopted the Regulations suspending, within the limits of the quota volumes and for the periods indicated, customs duties applicable to imports into the Community of:

- melons originating in Israel: 10 789 tonnes - from 1 November 1993 to 31 May 1994;
- cut flowers and flower buds, fresh, originating in
 - = Morocco: 325.5 tonnes; Jordan: 54.2 tonnes; Israel: 18 445 tonnes - from 1 November 1993 to 31 May 1994;
 - = Cyprus: 70 tonnes - from 1 June 1994 to 31 October 1994.

Technology initiative for disabled and elderly people (TIDE) (1993-1994)

The Council adopted the Decision on a Community technology initiative for disabled and elderly people (TIDE) (1993-1994). The initiative is aimed at promoting and applying technology with a view to encouraging the creation of an internal market in rehabilitation technology and assisting the economic and social integration of disabled and elderly people.

The scope of the TIDE initiative comprises four lines of action:

1. **Access to communication and information technology and support for interpersonal communication: access to and interaction with multimedia environments; technology to facilitate personal communications; accessible services and applications.**
2. **Environmental control technologies for daily living: user and system interfaces; robotics systems; mobility and transport control systems.**
3. **Restoration and enhancement of motor and cognitive functions: IT for individualized plans for assessment, rehabilitation and maintenance in the community; technology for rehabilitation and maintenance of motor functions; substitution devices for motor functions.**
4. **Integrated system technologies: smart environments and systems; orientation and navigation system for mobility; working environments for disabled and elderly people.**

The amount deemed necessary for implementing the initiative, including expenditure on staff and administration, is ECU 30 million.



