



European Commission
Directorate-General for Agriculture

Newsletter

ISSN 1560-1862

Agriculture a key theme at the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Agriculture was one of the key themes discussed at the United Nation's (UN) World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September. Calling for a reduction of trade-distorting farm subsidies, improved market access for developing countries and concrete actions to be taken to enhance the role of trade in rural development, the plan of implementation endorsed by the summit reaffirms sustainable development as a central element of the international agenda. Adopted by all 140 members of the UN, the conclusions also underline the role sustainable development plays in protecting the environment and alleviating poverty. The European Union (EU) welcomed the results of the WSSD as a 'success' (1).

Johannesburg built on the foundations set down at the UN's 'Earth Summit' held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Convened to address urgent problems with environmental protection and socioeconomic development, participants at Rio agreed that significant changes were required to achieve current development needs without compromising future requirements. They also emphasised the need to reduce the economic imbalance between rich and poor countries without endangering the environment. One of the most important outcomes of the Earth Summit was the adoption of 'Agenda 21', an extensive strategy for realising sustainable development in the 21st century. The purpose of the WSSD was to find ways of turning these plans into actions, as well as finding new ideas and possibilities for sustainable development.

For agriculture, which remains the principal economic activity in many developing and transitional economies, the WSSD mandate stipulated that the summit should try to find new ways of helping these countries develop their farm sectors. It is seen as a key to the development process, said representatives. In the summit discussions on agriculture, developing countries made it clear that a chief concern was that for them to fulfil their agricultural potential, it was necessary for richer countries to address the trade-distorting

aspects of their agricultural policies. Making better use of this potential was not simply a question of taking internal measures to address production and distribution problems, they said. It also requires better access to developed countries' markets, including reductions in tariff barriers, and fairer terms of competition to enable them to compete more successfully on the global market.

The summit's plan of implementation reaffirms the conclusions on agriculture adopted at last year's Doha WTO ministerial conference. These committed all parties to negotiations, without prejudging the outcome, which are aimed at substantial improvements in market access, reductions in trade-distorting domestic support, and reductions in export subsidies with a view to phasing them out. The WSSD says the relevant WTO committees must now work together to achieve an outcome to the current round of negotiations that promotes the environment and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the plan of implementation also pledged support for action to be taken to enhance the role of trade in sustainable development. This means, for example, encouraging trade that promotes the environment and the production of organic goods in developing countries, or strengthening the international movement for corporate responsibility. In particular, it emphasised the importance of partnerships between government, industry and society.

'We can be satisfied with the results of Johannesburg,' says Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Danish Prime Minister and current EU President (2). 'We have agreed an action plan and a set of principles for sustainable development. We have concluded a global deal and partnership recommending free trade and increased market access, increased development assistance, made a commitment to good governance and to a better environment' (3). Johannesburg does however deliver an important message to developed countries: they have to show that they are genuinely committed to

(1) See IP/02/1268 of 04/09/2002.

(2) The presidency of the European Union operates on a rotational basis with a new Member State assuming the presidency every six months.

(3) See Speech/02/422.

making real cuts in trade-distorting support. If we fail to show our concern about the impact of the CAP on developing countries, says Franz Fischler, EU Commissioner responsible for agriculture and rural development, we risk losing the support of our own citizens as well as those outside the EU.

In part, the success of the WSSD is down to two other international meetings that preceded it, says the Commission. Firstly, the WTO Ministerial held in

Doha, Qatar last November, set down the 'foundation stone' (4) for progressively reducing trade-distorting farm subsidies. And secondly, the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002 (5) which focussed on the ways in which resources for development are generated and deployed. The UN General Assembly will now meet in mid-November to endorse the results of the summit and set a schedule for its Commission on Sustainable Development.

(4) See IP/02/1247.

(5) For more information see: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

News in brief

□ EU funding for reconstruction and conversion of vineyards

Two decisions concerning the restructuring and conversion of vineyards were adopted by the European Commission in August. The first decision covers the initial distribution of EUR 443 million for action in the 2002/03 marketing year whilst the second relates to the reallocation of EUR 42 million left over from the 2001/02 marketing year. Funding for this purpose is covered by Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999 (1) and subsidies are granted in line with each Member State's share of the total EU area under vines and criteria determining certain needs of these specific areas. Each Member State's initial subsidy can be adjusted following their notification prior to 30 June each year of their actual expenditure and amended expenditure forecasts.

□ Conference 'The common agricultural policy and the challenge of enlargement': Riga, 16 and 17 September 2002

With the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union in mind, the Information Policy Unit of the Agriculture DG has organised two high-level international conferences for the 13 candidate countries. The first event was held in Riga, Latvia on 16 and 17 September 2002, at which Agriculture DG officials presented the most recent information on enlargement and rural development issues to 130 representatives from universities, consumer and agriculture NGOs, farmers' associations, public administrations and governments. Each presentation was followed by a question and answer session. The second day focused on the Irish experience relating to agriculture before and after its accession, which was very positive with regard to the CAP. The main conclusions of the European Parliament report entitled 'Enlargement and agriculture: successfully integrating the new Member States into the CAP' (2) were outlined by the rapporteur, MEP Karl Erik Olsson. Commissioner Fischler closed this very successful first event. In order to guarantee that as many information multipliers as possible benefit from these information seminars, the Information Policy Unit will repeat this exercise in Prague, in the Czech Republic, on 7 and 8 November.

□ New candidate country files and reports

Up-to-date information on agriculture in each of the candidate countries can now be found on the Agriculture DG web site. The country files contain statistics on bilateral trade with the EU, agricultural land use and employment, and more general information on their accession partnerships and Sapard (3) schemes. For the general index, visit the following site and click on the specific country you are interested in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/external/enlarge/countries/index_en.htm.

The individual country reports provide key statistical and economic information on the agricultural situation in each candidate country as of July 2002. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/external/enlarge/publi/index_en.htm and click on the country of your choice.

(1) Regulation (EC) No 1493/1999 of 17 May 1999 on the common organisation of the market in wine.

(2) Issues paper (2002/2059 (INI)). Adopted in plenary session of the European Parliament on 13 June 2002.

(3) Special accession programme for agriculture and rural development.



European Commission
Directorate-General for Agriculture

Published by: Eugène Leguen de Lacroix, EC Directorate-General for Agriculture.
This publication does not necessarily express the official views of the Commission.
For further information: European Commission, Office: L/130-4/148A, B-1049 Brussels
Tel. (32-2) 295 32 40, exchange (32-2) 299 11 11, fax (32-2) 295 75 40
Telex: COMEU B 21877. Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/index_en.htm
Printed on recycled paper

Text finalised 20.10.2002

KF-AA-02-008-EN-C