

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1981 - 1982

15 FEBRUARY 1982

DOCUMENT 1-1021/81

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mrs EWING, on behalf of the Group
of European Progressive Democrats,
Mr GRIFFITHS, Mrs BUCHAN, Mr GALLAGHER,
Mrs CLWYD and Mr GENDEBIEN

with request for a topical and urgent debate
pursuant to Rule 48 of the Rules of
Procedure

on the crisis in agriculture in the Highlands
and Islands of Scotland

'The European Parliament;

- considering that farm incomes in the EEC generally are going through one of the most serious crisis in modern times;
- considering the objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy as set out in Article 39 of the Treaty;
- considering the vital role that agriculture plays in the economy of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland where up to at least 30 per cent of the working population are in jobs dependent on agriculture;
- considering that the region suffers from the problems of sparse population, peripherality, mountainous terrain, remoteness from agricultural markets, high transport costs and a savage climate of low temperature, high rainfall and consequent acid soil;
- whereas the Western Isles sub-region has been selected for an Integrated Development Programme;
- noting with regret that after 3 years of negotiation this programme has still to be implemented;
- whereas the economic situations of the other sub-regions in the Highlands and Islands have deteriorated considerably in the interim period;
- **noting** that the dramatic decline in oil-related construction activities and the failure of two large scale industrial ventures which were established with Government assistance in an attempt to stem the flow of outward migration have been largely responsible for this deterioration;
- whereas the unemployment rates are considerably greater than the UK average and substantially greater than the average unemployment rate in the Community;
- whereas the authorities concerned now assert that the agricultural sector provides the only real hope for sustained employment in the region which has one of the most tragic histories of decline and outward migration;

- noting with concern that agricultural profits in the Highlands and Islands are considerably lower than they were in 1975/76 and that incomes decreased by almost 60 percent in real terms between 1976 and 1981;
 - noting with concern that the average farm bank indebtedness has been estimated to have increased by 48.5 percent between 1978 and 1980 (and that an increase of 72 percent has been found in the case of hill farms);
 - alarmed by the recent decline of the livestock sector which has always been the dominant factor in Highland agriculture;
 - deeply concerned that the number of full time agricultural workers declined by almost 14 percent between 1975 and 1980, and anxious to prevent a further drift from the land;
 - whereas the Agricultural Development package agreed on 24 June 1980 under Council Regulation 1820/80 for the West of Ireland may be regarded as a precedent for the deployment of the EAGGF in broadly based programmes in the least favoured agricultural areas of the Community;
 - whereas the European Parliament's Budget Committee and a large majority of Members present at the Budgets Session in November 1981 voted in favour of an amendment which sought to create a new line in the budget with a token entry for an Agricultural Development Programme in the highlands and Islands of Scotland;
 - noting with regret that this amendment which was intended to facilitate the deployment of Community Funds in the region failed to obtain the absolute majority required for its adoption;
1. Considers that the fragile economy of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland is even more dependent on agriculture, forestry and fisheries than at any time over the last 15 years.
 2. Considers that the agricultural sector provides the main hope for sustained employment in this region.
 3. Regrets the decline which has taken place in the region's agriculture since the United Kingdom joined the Community.
 4. Requests the Commission to come forward with appropriate proposals for an agricultural Development Programme for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
 5. Urges the British Government and the Commission to reach agreement on the Western Isles Integrated Development Programme with the shortest delay.
 6. Requests its President to forward this Resolution to the Council and the Commission.'