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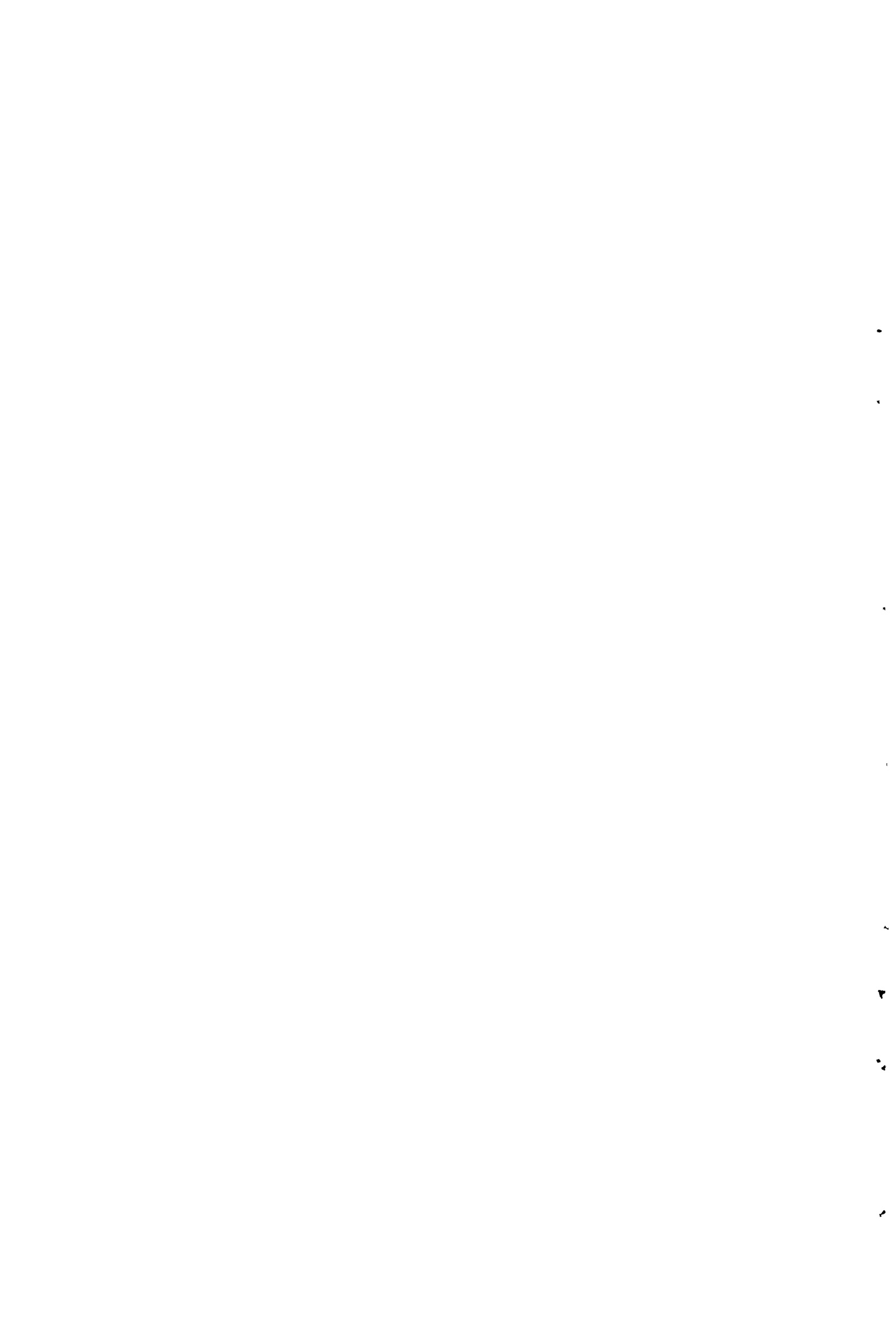
Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 352/75) concerning a regulation temporarily suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on a certain number of agricultural products

Rapporteur: Mr R. HOWELL

PE 42.454/fin.



By letter of 29 October 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 temporarily suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on a certain number of agricultural products.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture as the Committee responsible and the Committee on External Economic Relations as the committee asked for its opinion.

The Committee on Agriculture appointed Mr Ralph Howell rapporteur.

It considered this proposal at its meeting of 4 and 5 November 1975.

At the same meeting the committee adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement by 13 votes to 3 with 3 abstentions.

The following were present : Mr Laban, Vice-Chairman and Acting Chairman; Mr Howell, rapporteur; Mr Bourdelles, Mr Brégégère, Mr Cifarelli, Mr Della Briotta, Mrs Dunwoody, Mr Espersen, Mr Frehsee, Mr Hughes, Mr Kofoed, Mr de Koning, Mr Martens, Mr Scott-Hopkins, Lord St. Oswald, Lord Walston.

The Committee on External Economic Relations has decided not to give an opinion.

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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 temporarily suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on a certain number of agricultural products

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (COM(75) 515 final),
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 43 of the EEC Treaty (Doc.352/75),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture (Doc. 370/75),
1. Approves the Commission's proposal;
 2. Reminds the Commission that it has been asked by the European Parliament on a number of occasions:
 - (a) to submit a report on reasons for the inadequate supplies of agricultural products which have been the subject of proposals from the Commission for the suspension of autonomous duties;
 - (b) to abolish tariffs, at a suitable time, for those products where there is no significant Community production.



EXPLANATORY STATEMENTThe purpose of the Commission's proposal

1. The object of this proposal is the temporary reduction of CCT duties on the following agricultural products which are not produced in sufficient quantities within the Community:

- Mushrooms, excluding cultivated mushrooms preserved in brine, in sulphur water or in other preservative solutions, but not specially prepared for immediate consumption;
- Dried onions

2. The duties are to be reduced from 1 January to 30 June 1976.

3. The existing and proposed duties are as follows:

	<u>existing duty</u>	<u>proposed duty</u>
mushrooms (except cultivated varieties)	12%	4%
dried onions	18%	14%

4. This measure is intended to ensure that supplies of these products are available in sufficiently favourable terms for Community processors, so as to allow them to compete with processing industries in Third Countries.

5. The Commission has received a further request for a suspension of duties on bitter or Seville oranges and almonds, but is not prepared to propose such a measure at the moment in view of the negotiations in course with nations supplying these products.

Community requirements

6. Community production and import requirements of specialised products are often difficult to establish. Moreover, information supplied by national administrations is often incomplete.

This is to be regretted: it is impossible for the European Parliament to give an opinion on the basis of incomplete statistical information.

It is clear, however, that Community production of dried onions can only cover a very small part of the needs of the British processing industries.

7. According to the Member States requesting suspension of tariffs, the picture is as follows :

	<u>Importing States concerned</u>	<u>Requirements (tonnes)</u>	<u>Imports from Community (tonnes)</u>	<u>Imports from Third States (tonnes)</u>
Mushrooms (except cultivated varieties)	Germany	N.A. ¹	470 - 940 ²	3760 - 4230 ²
Dried onions	U.K.	9,000	(950)	8,050

8. The Committee on Agriculture believes that it can approve the Commission's proposal on the basis of the explanatory statement provided.

9. It would like the Commission, however, to be more coherent in the explanatory statement provided : existing duties and import requirements are given for some products but not for others.

The Commission has difficulty in providing figures of production and requirements for such specialised products as those under consideration, and the information supplied by Member States is often incomplete. Yet decisions cannot be taken in the absence of information on the situation. This consideration has significance for the more general point to be made by the Committee on Agriculture.

10. Moreover, the Committee on Agriculture finds it difficult to understand why the Commission, which has had these requests for tariff suspensions under consideration since May, should present its proposals for urgent consideration at such a late point in time. The Committee on Agriculture insists, therefore, that the Commission submit future proposals earlier so as to allow for proper consultation of the European Parliament.

11. No explanation is given in the Commission's explanatory statement as to why it proposes partial reductions, and not complete suspensions, of the tariffs under consideration.

This is apparently a compromise : the Member States requested complete suspensions, but the Commission has proposed intermediate figures so as to facilitate their adoption in the Council.

12. The Commission periodically proposes suspensions of duties for certain agricultural products, a number of which are put forward in a regular fashion. Moreover, the processing industries in a number of Member States are almost totally dependent on supplies from Third Countries, as is the case of the industries processing dried onions in Britain.

¹ These figures are not available.

² Approximate figures.

Therefore, the Committee on Agriculture requests that the Commission examine the possibility of permanently abolishing duties at a suitable moment on those products of which the Community production is not significant.

Clearly, the Community should not abolish tariffs unilaterally but should seek a suitable occasion either in the course of tariff negotiations or, where products are suitable, in the framework of generalised preferences.

13. In conclusion, the Committee on Agriculture reminds the Commission that it has been asked by Parliament on several occasions to submit a report¹ on the reasons for the inadequate supplies of some of the principal agricultural products which have been the object of proposals from the Commission for the suspension of autonomous duties.

¹ O.J. No C 49, 28.6.1973 and O.J. No C 76, 3.7.1974, p. 55.

