

Newsletter on the Common Agricultural Policy

Weekly

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Social policy as a component of the common agricultural policy

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Foundations of the social elements in the EEC's agricultural policy

In the EEC, as elsewhere, social problems in agriculture can be solved only in the general framework of social policy. In all six EEC countries agriculture has a particular place in the structure of society and in the social measures taken. The extent to which these measures concern themselves with agriculture varies greatly from one country to another.

The EEC Treaty stipulates that the social policy of the individual Member States must be approximated (Article 117 of the EEC Treaty). Social policy is of particular importance among the principles set out in the Preamble to the Treaty, where the signatories direct their efforts "to the essential purpose of constantly improving the living and working conditions of their peoples". The means of achieving this objective are provided largely by social policy.

It is social policy more than any other that is called upon to provide constructively for the needs of the population. The implementation of social aims contained in the EEC Treaty must be kept within economically and financially justifiable limits and must be practicable from the legislative angle.

In other words, only technical and economic progress in the member countries creates the conditions without which there will be no improvement in social benefits. Consequently there is an inherent connection between what is legislatively possible, economically justifiable and socially necessary. An ideal compromise between these three forces is almost out of the question. Experience shows that the situation evolves in dynamic fashion, that technical progress leads to increased financial possibilities, and that these in turn lead to increased social needs.

What spheres are covered by social policy? Social policy is closely connected with human labour and the connection may be briefly summarized as follows:

- (i) Pay;
- (ii) Vocational training and creation of jobs;
- (iii) Working conditions;
- (iv) Industrial safety;
- (v) Provision of new jobs;
- (vi) Retraining;
- (vii) Care during disablement.

As a man's life must not consist of work alone, social policy in fact concerns more than just his job; more and more it helps him with:

- (a) Further education;
- (b) Development of personality;
- (c) Recreation;
- (d) Protection;
- (e) Welfare.

The task of social policy, therefore, is to distribute material and non-material goods as equally as possible so that the individual feels happy in society whatever the level to which he belongs.

. In the work of harmonization it is then at these points that the Community's social policy must aim.

The Treaty and social policy in agriculture

In the EEC Treaty social policy, and in particular that part of it which concerns agriculture, has been assigned a place apart from the other spheres of policy. In the relevant chapter of the Treaty the aims set out in the Preamble are repeated. In Article 39(1 b) it is expressly stated that one objective of the common agricultural policy is "to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, particularly by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture."

Just as in the EEC's economic policy the various sectors form one whole, so too in agriculture market and price policy, policy on trade and structures, and social policy, all add up to the common agricultural policy. The EEC's social policy in agriculture, therefore, cannot be considered as something independent. It supplements the other ways and means of agricultural policy. On the one hand its purpose is to promote the common agricultural policy and on the other to undertake new social tasks which arise as the common agricultural policy is implemented. The contribution of social policy to the completion of the common agricultural policy comprises the following:

1. Measures necessary to promote and implement the common agricultural policy;
2. Measures necessitated by the special problems of agricultural occupations;
3. Measures to wipe out the gap between the social progress made in agriculture and in the other sectors of employment;
4. Measures required to deal immediately with any temporary disadvantages arising from the common agricultural policy.

Care must be taken that these measures shall nowhere conflict with general social policy or with the established social systems in agriculture.

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Because of the close relationship between the two fields, there are priorities in social policy just as there are in the common agricultural policy itself, and these priorities must be established in the light of the present and probable trends in agriculture. They are based in part on the trends observed over the last few years. In all six Community countries the agricultural population has been shrinking both relatively and absolutely. Agriculture has always lost workers to the other sectors of the economy, and from the economic angle this is only to be welcomed.

A cause for concern at the moment, however, is the pace of this drift from the land. There is insufficient guidance for the workers who leave agriculture, and for the most part they are taken on as unskilled workers in other occupations.

It must not be forgotten that despite all the progress made in mechanization, agriculture will continue to need labour even in the future if it is to play its due part in the economy.

Where cultural and technical matters are concerned, and especially in the facilities available for education and training, there is a wide gap between rural and urban areas. The gap has if anything widened in the last few years instead of shrinking, giving young workers an additional incentive to move to the towns.

Increased capital investment and increased mechanization in larger agricultural establishments mean that over a wider range of activities really skilled workers are indispensable. As the qualifications of these skilled workers rise, the question of paying them wages comparable with those in industry becomes even more pressing. The problem arises not only for paid workers, but also for any members of the family who work, for the farmers themselves and for their wives.

These are only a few of the main points to be taken into account in reshaping the pattern of rural society. The changes now occurring must be directed in such a way that life in this country is worth living and offers sufficient chances of advancement. This will be possible only if the agricultural areas are opened up economically and infrastructure is improved. Roads, good schools, sports facilities, cultural events and social life are among the most important of the instruments available to those responsible for social policy in agriculture.

The Action Programme to implement social policy in agriculture

An Action Programme covering the urgent social measures to be taken in the agricultural sphere has been drawn up in the light of social requirements. The programme brings up all the main points such as occupational and geographical mobility, training, advisory services and pay. The significance of agricultural

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social policy for the social integration of the farm population had already been stressed in the resolution adopted at the Stresa agricultural conference in July 1958. It also figured in the EEC Commission's basic proposals of 30 June 1960. The intensive studies which followed led to the drafting of an Action Programme for social measures in agriculture. These studies included a general survey of the social situation of paid farm workers and another on the social position of family farms in the Community countries. Preparatory work and investigations were also carried out on availability of work, vocational training, health and safety at work, and social security.

The subject of social policy in agriculture has been discussed on many occasions in the European Parliament. A resolution adopted by the Parliament draws attention to the generally unfavourable social situation of farm workers when compared with that of workers in other sectors.

The Parliament also drew attention to the unfavourable situation of unpaid workers on family farms and the need to take action on the matter at European level.

Once the preparatory work had been concluded a Consultative Conference on the social aspects of the common agricultural policy was held in Rome in October 1961. The EEC Commission wished to hear from both employers and employees in agriculture what they considered, in the light of their experience, should be the guidelines for social policy. Certain divergences of opinion were apparent.

Both sides agreed that efforts should be made to bring social benefits in agriculture up to the level reached in other sectors. As a result of this conference two advisory committees were set up to give the EEC Commission further support in its task of harmonizing social legislation in agriculture.

It was interesting to note that in the subsequent discussions one of the two committees - the one dealing with the problems of workers employed in agriculture - was able to tackle such controversial points as the alignment of agricultural wages and harmonization of working hours. It was recommended that in the near future an attempt should be made to introduce a 45-hour week for paid agricultural workers throughout the Community.

Once the farming organizations had been consulted and the studies completed, the Commission was able, on 1 October 1963, to submit to the Council of Ministers its

Action Programme to implement social policy in agriculture

The Council referred the programme to the European Parliament, which in its decision requested that social policy in agriculture should be made an integral part of the common agricultural policy,

in keeping with Articles 39-41 of the EEC Treaty. After consultation with government experts and with employers and workers it was clear that it was very necessary to decide what tasks were the most important. The EEC Commission placed those harmonization measures that were considered to be particularly urgent on a priority list within the Action Programme, and submitted the list to the Council of Ministers on 29 July 1964. The Council approved this priority programme and stipulated that for each step to be taken the legal basis must be specified and discussion limited to the measure in question.

Implementation of the priority programme

The programme is divided into short and medium-term projects. The EEC Commission aimed at completing the short-term measures by 31 December 1965, the end of the second stage of the transitional period, and the medium-term projects by 31 December 1970, the end of the transitional period itself.

(a) Work availability

Short-term: extension of specialized advisory services for occupational matters, further training and retraining. Two proposals were submitted to the Council, one on the training of social advisors and another on retraining in agriculture;

Medium-term: preparation of a basis for estimating future possibilities of employment in EEC agriculture; examination of measures to promote possibility of continuous employment in agriculture.

A start has been made on the study of future work availability in agriculture. The special surveys of the position in olive and rice-cultivation have been completed, while a start has been made on those relating to bee-keeping and viticulture. Work has also started on monographs covering various agricultural occupations, and the causes and circumstances of the drift from the land are being examined.

(b) Vocational training

Short-term: action programme to promote further training.

Medium-term: expansion and improvement of training, adjustment of training level, improvement of supplementary training.

An action programme for vocational training in agriculture has been brought to the notice of the Council of Ministers and work is being done on a study of systems of agricultural training.

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(c) Social security

Short-term: improvement of social services for seasonal workers; improved safeguards for all agricultural workers in connection with health, occupational diseases and accidents at work; preparation of a study on distortion of competition owing to the systems of financing social insurance.

Medium-term: continuation of efforts to provide comparable services for all persons working in agriculture.

In the health field, proposals were submitted to the Council on the protection of young workers and on social services for expectant mothers.

An investigation is being undertaken into methods of comparing incomes in agriculture with those in other sectors.

(d) Housing

Short-term: minimum standards for seasonal workers' accommodation;

Medium-term: minimum standards for agricultural workers' housing and measures to improve farmers' housing. A recommendation on housing for seasonal workers is being considered by the Consultative Committee on social problems relating to workers employed in agriculture.

(e) Protection of workers, occupation health and safety

Short-term: ban on paid employment of children of school age; protection of young workers and women against work harmful to the health; rules on working hours and periods of rest; drafting of provisions on the use of poisonous and dangerous materials in agriculture.

Medium-term: studies on dangerous implements and apparatus. A proposal regulating the use of poisonous and dangerous substances has been submitted to the Council of Ministers. A conference is to be held on the use and application of electrical installations.

(f) Working conditions

Short-term: minimum wages in agriculture; harmonization of the grading of adult workers' wages according to age; introduction of the free weekend; introduction of a maximum number of working hours.

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Medium-term: levelling of social conditions; introduction of a level of pay and other working conditions in agriculture comparable to those in other sectors.

A recommendation has been issued by the Joint Committee on working hours and there has been a recommendation on minimum wages. A study has been planned on wages and working hours.

(g) Share-cropping

The study on share-cropping decided upon as a result of the Rome Conference on social matters has been completed.

(h) Control

Short-term: proposals for the requisite checks on the harmonization measures introduced.

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