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REPORT

on Agricultural product quality policy: what strategy to follow?
(2009/2105(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Giancarlo Scotta'

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Agricultural product quality policy: what strategy to follow? (2009/2105(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission of 28 May 2009 on agricultural product quality policy (COM(2009)0234),
 - having regard to the Commission's green paper of 15 October 2008 on agricultural product quality: product standards, farming requirements and quality schemes (COM(2008)0641),
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2009 on ensuring food quality including harmonisation or mutual recognition of standards¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 October 1998 on quality policy for agricultural products and agri-foodstuffs²,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of October 2008 on food quality certification schemes,
 - having regard to the health check for the common agricultural policy (CAP),
 - having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers (COM(2008)0040),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A7-0029/2010),
- A. whereas the European Union has the highest quality standards for food products in the world and these high standards are demanded by Europe's consumers and represent a means of maximising added value,
- B. whereas support for small and medium-sized farms, whose production and consumption levels meet local requirements, sustains both traditional and empirical farming methods and ensures they are applied in accordance with the highest standards of quality and safety,
- C. whereas European quality products constitute a living cultural and gastronomic heritage for the Union and are an essential component of economic and social activity in many of Europe's regions, bolstering activities directly linked to local realities, especially in rural

¹ P6_TA-PROV(2009)0098.

² OJ C 328, 26.10.1998, p. 232.

areas,

- D. whereas existing policy concerning the distribution chain affects small producers' chances of reaching a wide target group,
- E. whereas there is ever-increasing consumer interest not only in food safety but also in the origins and production methods of food products; whereas the EU has already responded to this trend by introducing four food quality and origin schemes, namely Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) and Organic Farming,
- F. whereas consumers associate these certification schemes with a guarantee of higher quality,
- G. whereas new technologies can be employed for providing detailed information on the origins and characteristics of agricultural and food products,

General remarks

1. Welcomes the Commission's communication and the incorporation therein of several of Parliament's recommendations following the reflection process launched through the green paper on agricultural product quality; wishes to see the measures proposed by Parliament in this resolution implemented as soon as possible, so as to act effectively on the feedback received from farmers and producers during the consultation process and with a view to assessing the desirability, necessity and proportionality of the proposed regulatory framework, while taking account of the effects of the economic crisis and the need not to generate additional costs or burdens for producers;
2. Regrets the fact that, on grounds of a simplification which could prove counterproductive, the Commission communication has only partially taken on board the requirements specified by the sectors concerned following the publication of the green paper;
3. Emphasises that quality is a key issue for the entire food chain and an essential asset in supporting the competitiveness of European agrifood producers; considers that quality can constitute a foundation for important business advantages for European producers and can make an indirect contribution to rural development;
4. Considers that the EU quality policy can bring about increased competitiveness and added value in the economy of Europe's regions and that quality agricultural and agri-food production is often the only chance for many rural areas with limited production alternatives; further considers quality as an engine for product diversity and a means of developing workforce skills;
5. Calls for the strengthening of the EU quality policy, since it represents a significant incentive for producers in the Union to improve their efforts in terms of quality, food safety and respect for the environment; believes this policy can help to boost substantially the added value of the Union's agricultural and food production in an ever more globalised market;

6. Is confident that quality policy can bring about important developments in European agriculture, quality products being an area of high output, with PGI products alone already worth more than EUR 14 billion;
7. Considers that introducing different levels of protection for European quality designations could create unfairness, especially if the main criteria employed are economic; believes, therefore, that all geographical indications should enjoy the same degree of recognition;
8. Considers that, given the increasingly open market, it is essential that the EU uphold, in the WTO negotiations, the principle of quality products being protected effectively through the safeguard arrangements for intellectual property;
9. Emphasises that, in the WTO negotiations, the Commission must seek to secure an agreement on the 'non-trade concerns' which will ensure that imported agricultural products meet the same EU requirements, in the areas of food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection, that are imposed on agricultural products produced inside the Union;
10. Takes the view that the new EU quality policy should be more open to products from the new Member States, which gained access to the system for registering geographical indications only a few years ago; believes that the requirements to be met in order to register a given product should be transparent and understandable not just to applicants (producers) but also to consumers;
11. Advocates closer monitoring and more coordination between the Commission and the Member States so as to ensure that imported food products meet the EU's quality and food safety standards, as well as its environmental and social standards;
12. Stresses the need for quality standards that ensure effective communication with consumers about the way that products have been produced and that offer incentives for improving these standards, thus contributing to wider EU policy objectives;
13. Believes that European quality policy must be closely linked to the reform of the CAP after 2013; takes the view that, in the context of that policy, the EU needs to offer financial support with a view to obtaining agri-food production of high quality; believes that such support should take the form of developing, diversifying and stimulating access to the second pillar of the CAP, especially as regards the modernisation of farms and the creation and development of micro-businesses in the countryside; stresses that financial support for product quality development can help produce a shift towards market orientation for semi-subsistence farmers; believes that producers' organisations need more support, especially so as not to disadvantage small producers;
14. Stresses that diversity should continue to be Europe's fundamental asset and that all quality products that meet the criteria laid down by the EU should be recognised and protected; considers that after 2013 the CAP should support the quality policy and, in particular, producers' efforts to promote more environment-friendly production methods; points out that regions are the CAP's partners and that they co-finance and manage rural development; adds that, by virtue of their geographical proximity, regions are the partners of producers and, in particular, producers of traditional and organic products; takes the

view that regions should be involved in the recognition and promotion of products that carry an indication, traditional products and organic products;

EU farming requirements and marketing standards

15. Stresses the need for formal recognition of the efforts made by European producers in meeting EU farming requirements with regard to quality, environmental, animal welfare and health standards;
16. Calls on the Commission, in this respect, to conduct a study of the various options available for giving European producers the possibility of displaying on their products their commitment to quality, food safety and observance of all European standards of production, including the option of an EU quality logo, which should be made available exclusively to agricultural goods resulting entirely from production in the EU, and which, since it would certify compliance with the legislation subject to official controls, should in no circumstances involve any additional cost to operators or any financial or administrative burden on the Member States exercising the controls;
17. Considers that EU agricultural products meet a quality standard in themselves, since they are produced in accordance with EU legislative provisions concerning product quality, sustainable production and environmental and health criteria (cross-compliance); in addition, the cultural landscapes of Europe are preserved through the cultivation of agricultural products; given these requirements, a ‘grown [produced or made] in Europe’ quality label should be a possibility;
18. Considers that sectoral marketing standards play an important role in the production chain, and that consequently they should be kept; they render changes on the market transparent, enable purchasers to compare product prices, sizes and quality, and ensure a level playing-field in European competition;
19. Regrets the near-total dismantling of the Community marketing rules in the fruit and vegetables sector; calls on the Member States and the Commission to launch a detailed debate with a view to studying the impact of this measure, in order to restore, if necessary, a solid Community framework to improve the transparency of commercial operations and establish a common language for operators, as well as consumer-friendly quality criteria;
20. Supports the introduction of additional optional reserved terms, and especially the provision of a clear definition and usage of the terms ‘mountain’, ‘island’, ‘local’ and ‘low carbon’, and the adoption of EU guidelines concerning their use; further expresses support for harmonisation at Community level of the term ‘mountain’, which is currently regulated in only a few Member States; calls on the Commission to conduct a study on further developing ‘carbon-footprint’ labelling towards a more comprehensive ‘ecological-footprint’ measurement, since labels or terms which refer only to carbon levels neglect other key environmental aspects, such as impact on water resources and biodiversity;
21. Believes it is necessary to promote the voluntary labelling of other environment-friendly and animal-friendly production methods, such as ‘integrated production’, ‘outdoor grazing’ and ‘hill farming’;

22. Considers that products of mountain areas and GMO-free areas should be protected; calls on the Commission, therefore, to make every possible effort to ensure that such areas are appropriately protected;
23. Calls on the Commission to launch a reflection process on the possibility of introducing quality indicators related to the social conditions of production, e.g. producers' incomes and contractual relations between producers, processors and marketers;
24. Urges that consumers be provided with all available relevant information; favours the introduction of compulsory legislation for 'place of farming' labelling for primary products on a case-by-case basis; considers that this must be done in a manner that takes into account the costs of such a Europe-wide operation, as well as the specificities of particular sectors;
25. Notes that 'place of farming' labelling has been implemented with success in countries such as Australia and the USA and that it is already mandatory in the EU for a number of agricultural products;
26. Points out that supplementary and specific information is voluntary and that the total labelling content must not be overloaded; takes the view that the EU quality label should remain clearly recognisable as a priority;
27. Believes that alternative methods of providing information, e.g. via the Internet or barcodes or on the receipt, should also be considered;
28. Calls on the Commission to carry out a thorough technical and economic study to ensure that the new legislation does not impose excessive costs on the food processing industry, in particular on small and medium-sized producers; such a study should cover the feasibility of introducing compulsory 'place of farming' labelling for processed products which contain 'significant ingredients' (meaning an ingredient of a food product that represents more than 50% of the dry weight of that food product) or 'characterising ingredients' (meaning the ingredient of a food usually associated with the name of the food by consumers), as defined in the proposed EU regulation on the provision of food information to consumers, Article 2;
29. Requests that the simplification of standards and the enhancement of the credibility of the EU quality logo should complement already-existing certificates or designations of local, regional or national origin in the Member States;
30. Calls on the Commission to maintain consistency in its proposals on agricultural product quality policy, in terms of the approach to 'country of origin' labelling and the proposed regulation on the provision of food information to consumers; considers that agricultural product quality policy should be implemented in a manner that takes into account the costs of new policy, as well as the specificities of particular sectors such as the processed agricultural goods sector;

Geographical indications and traditional specialities

31. Considers the protected designations of origin and geographical indications system to be

one of the CAP instruments intended to support the development of rural areas, protect the cultural heritage of regions and foster the diversification of employment in rural areas;

32. Considers that geographical indications have considerable importance for European agriculture; is of the opinion that the three systems of registration of geographical indications (for wines, spirits and for agricultural products and foodstuffs) should be maintained as they stand at present;
33. Believes that the current EU system for the protection of GI products should be maintained and that protection at EU level should be accorded to all GIs; also considers that parallel national or regional systems of recognition should not be established, as they could result in differing levels of protection; Takes the view that there is no need to introduce further Community-wide foodstuff certification systems, as this would devalue the existing systems and confuse consumers;
34. Further considers that the two instruments in place – the protected designation of origin (PDO) and the protected geographical indication (PGI) – should also be kept in the future, given their high degree of recognition and success; holds that a clearer distinction, for consumers, needs to be made between PDO and PGI and that this can be achieved through an overall information and promotion effort, involving Community financial support in the context of both the international market and third countries, inter alia by increasing the percentage of Community cofinancing;
35. Considers that the current EU rules on GIs should be supplemented to ensure full recognition and enhancement of the role played by organisations designated or recognised by the Member States as responsible for managing, protecting and/or promoting intellectual property rights conferred by registration as a GI;
36. Considers that, on the basis of producers' experience, it has emerged that the management of product quality through PDO and PGI specifications and the effectiveness of protection against usurpations are not sufficient for the further development of GI products; takes the view that EU legislation should be amended so as to enable Member States to recognise and enhance the proper role of organisations which they designate or recognise as responsible for the management, protection and/or promotion of GIs and their intellectual property rights and to authorise such organisations to adapt production potential to market demands, on the basis of fair and non-discriminatory rules;
37. Proposes enhancing the role of geographical indication owners' consortia¹, with a view to defining the legislation with regard to both volume management and use of geographical indications in respect of the goods produced; considers that consortia should be able to play a role in the coordination of economic operators, with a view to bringing quantities produced and placed on the market as closely into line as possible with the quantities that the market can absorb, and in promotion measures vis-à-vis farmers and consumers; considers that this would more effectively guarantee the long-term viability of the different stages of production, processing and distribution, which is essential to the life of rural areas; adds that quantity control is one of the requirements of quality control; takes

¹ For example, the *consortium* in Italy, *consejo regulador* in Spain and *organisme de défense et de gestion* or *détenteur d'IG* in France.

the view that the definition of the role of consortia should be included in Community legislation; considers that practices and experiences identified in the various EU Member States could be recorded and used in defining the rights and duties of consortia;

38. Considers that no additional criteria should be added to the registration process for any of those instruments, but rather that the aim should be simplification; notes that the current procedures for registration of PDOs and PGIs are complex and lengthy; urges the Commission to find ways by which this process could be speeded up;³⁹. Stresses the need to streamline the processing of applications for registration, but does not support the idea of shortening the scrutiny process by arbitrarily rejecting applications which the Commission deems incomplete at an early stage; deplores the fact that, in many cases, the Commission's initial views are formed too hastily or do not fit the case in hand, owing to an imperfect understanding of the specific characteristics of a product or a local market;
40. Calls on the Commission to conduct a study with regard to the appropriate information (labelling and all other means available) required for PDO/PGI products marketed under the private trade name of a retailer; calls for PDO and PGI registration of the producer's name to be compulsory where the product is marketed under the private trade name of a retailer;
41. Considers that, where a product protected by a GI is used as an ingredient, the body responsible for the GI or the competent authority should be able to lay down rules governing the use of its name in the sales names of processed products, and should be authorised to carry out specific checks to verify that the GI product's characteristics, image and reputation have not been adulterated; considers that the Commission should establish clear guidelines regarding use of the names of GI products used as ingredients on the labels of processed products, so as to avoid consumers being misled; 42. Endorses the establishment of Community rules to enable GI management bodies to lay down packaging rules for their products in order to ensure that their high quality is in no way diminished;
43. Opposes the idea that GIs can be replaced by trademarks, as these are fundamentally different legal instruments; stresses that the differences between trademarks and GIs need to be better explained; calls for effective implementation of existing Community rules making it impossible for a trademark containing or referring to PDOs/PGIs to be registered by operators who do not represent the producers' organisations for such PDOs/PGIs;
44. Further demands thorough ex-officio protection of GIs, as an obligation for authorities in all Member States; wishes to see this specifically addressed through a revision of Regulation (EC) 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs¹ and through better definition of the control procedures applicable at all stages of the marketing of products both before and after they are placed on the market;
45. Considers that the instrument of Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG) must be kept, whilst the corresponding rules for registration need further simplification; calls, in this

¹ OJ L 93, 31.3.2006, p. 12.

respect, on the Commission to review the TSG instrument, study the possibilities of speeding up the application procedure and explore possibilities for offering better product protection under this scheme, as well as any other means which may render this particular scheme more attractive to producers; recalls that TSG is a relatively recent instrument, which explains its slow development; considers that this instrument should be better communicated to producers and allowed to become a familiar tool for quality promotion in Europe;

46. Considers that, in order to prevent the disappearance of knowledge about traditional food and how it has been prepared for generations, the Commission should consider creating a European knowledge bank for old recipes and historical food preparation methods;
47. Supports the establishment of tools for the collective promotion and publicising of small traditional, local and artisanal products linked to specific areas and bearing a geographical name, for which PDO/PGI access procedures would be too cumbersome and costly;
48. Recalls that some GIs are systematically counterfeited in third countries; this undermines the reputation and image of the GI product and misleads consumers; emphasises that securing protection of a GI in a third country is a long and difficult procedure for producers, since each third country may have developed its own specific protection system; invites the European Commission to support technically and financially the organisations in charge of GIs in order to facilitate the resolution of usurpation problems;
49. Calls for greater protection of geographical indications
 - in the WTO, both by extending protection under Article 23 of the TRIPS agreement to all GIs and by establishing a legally binding multilateral register for GIs, and
 - in third countries, by negotiating bilateral agreements, in particular with economically significant countries;
 - supports the Commission's aim to include geographical indications within the scope of the 'Anti-counterfeiting trade agreement' and in the work of the future 'European observatory on counterfeiting and piracy'; and
 - considers that the Commission should work more closely with bodies representing GI producers prior to the launch of trade negotiations and during the negotiating process;
 - considers genuine progress regarding geographical indications to be an essential precondition for balanced agreement in the context of WTO agricultural negotiations;
50. Believes that it is essential to intensify information and promotion campaigns regarding the *sui generis* protection of GIs; calls on the Commission to continue to promote the GI concept with third countries, particularly by stepping up technical assistance missions in conjunction with European GI producers and/or their representative organisations;

Integrated production

51. Believes it is necessary to promote production systems that are environment-friendly and based on a rationalisation of inputs, as is the case with 'integrated production';

52. Stresses that introducing legislation at European level on integrated production would raise the profile of the efforts being made by the EU's farmers and stockbreeders in the areas of food safety, the environment and animal welfare vis-à-vis third-country imports; believes that there should simultaneously be a promotion and marketing campaign for European integrated production;
53. Supports promoting systems for producing quality food products using sustainable criteria, as in the case of integrated production; calls for the Community regulation of this area, with a view to unifying the criteria existing in the different Member States, to be backed up by a suitable promotion campaign informing the consumer of the main features of integrated production in Europe;

Organic farming

54. Reaffirms its belief that organic farming and integrated production offer health benefits to consumers, as well as a guarantee that the production process involved avoids environmental damage associated with the use of fertilisers, and also offers European farmers a major growth opportunity, even though it is not in itself the solution to the issue of future global food supplies; supports recent efforts to develop a new EU organic logo, applicable to all EU farmed products;
55. Takes the view that there should be a genuine single market in organic products, towards which goal the introduction of a compulsory Community logo represents a major contribution; in this connection, expresses its support for the framework established in Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91¹, and hopes that, even though it has come into force only recently, it will fulfil all of its legislative potential as soon as possible;
56. Stresses that both the Member States and the EU have the duty to promote quality products and their protection at international level; believes, in this connection, that more stringent controls are needed on organic products from third countries, in the interests of fair competition between EU and third-country organic products;
57. Considers that the appearance of non-organic products labelled in such a way as to suggest that they are products of organic farming harms the development of a single EU market in organic products; in this connection, expresses concern at attempts to extend the scope of the organic label to food products not produced in accordance with organic farming principles;
58. Is concerned at the growing number of private organic labels in non-food products, a rapidly expanding sector which is not covered by Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91¹; calls on the Commission to assess whether the provisions should be extended to cover this sector;
59. Reaffirms that, in order to improve the functioning of the internal market in organic

¹ OJ L 189, 20.7.2007, p. 1.

products, it is necessary to:

- ensure that organic products from third countries fulfil the same requirements as organic products from the EU and that monitoring for this is stepped up,
- register the country of origin in the case of fresh and processed organic products imported from third countries, independently of whether the Community organic product logo is used,
- enhance the credibility of the European logo by means of a programme to promote organic products, and
- designate non-agricultural products referred to in connection with organic production methods in a manner distinct from the designation of organic agricultural products;

60. Welcomes the creation of offices for traditional and organic products at Member State level; believes that every Member State should have bodies, whether public or private, that are recognised both by producers and consumers for purposes of promoting and validating local organic and quality production;

61. Calls on the Commission to outline how it proposes to promote the local trading of environmentally friendly agricultural products;

Private certification systems

62. Stresses that, as things stand, private certification systems do not provide additional information on the quality of the products concerned: rather, they are in many cases becoming a financial and administrative burden as regards farmers' access to the market;

63. Calls for an inventory of all private quality certification systems which European producers are required to implement in addition to the quality specifications already imposed under EU legislation; supports the establishment of a Community Legislative Framework of Basic Principles for the transparent implementation of the private certification systems in question;

64. Supports the Commission's initiative of drawing up guidelines for best practice for the operation of all systems related to agricultural product quality; these guidelines should be followed by the operators and should include a set of concepts aimed at helping the productive sector to develop the added value of its products, encouraging the mutual recognition of certification systems and participation by the productive sector in drawing up such systems, and promoting, through producers' associations, the simplification of the administrative burden of certification, with a view to reducing farmers' costs as much as possible;

Information and promotion policy

65. Deplores the failure of the Commission's communication to mention the need to encourage promotion measures, given their importance for ensuring the profitability of European farmers' efforts in terms of quality, food safety and the environment; believes

that the promotion instruments currently available to the EU need to be revised so as to improve their efficiency; proposes, in this connection, extending to the EU market the promotion aids recently introduced in the wine sector;

66. Supports European action to communicate, as extensively and as effectively as possible, the benefits of the EU's policies for food quality and safety; recommends that the Commission and Member States step up their information and promotion efforts regarding quality and food safety standards for Community products;
67. These communication and information efforts regarding GIs and community trademarks could be pursued through public and/or private entities, individuals or organisations;
68. Considers that, in view of the importance of the European market to GI producers, the Commission and the Member States should provide additional financial resources for promotion programmes within the internal market, while continuing to increase the budget for promotion campaigns in third countries;
69. Stresses that information policy should be targeted not only at consumers but also at producers, since the behaviour of the latter is closely linked to their knowledge of the market and of consumers' appreciation of their products' quality;
70. Emphasises the potential role of EU funding in this area, especially by means available under the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development); nonetheless stresses that credit requirements have now become tighter for small producers in the wake of the world financial crisis, and that this drastically limits their access to cofinancing as provided for under rural development programmes; suggests, in this connection, that the Commission consider harmonising the system of agricultural credits at EU level;
71. Favours encouraging agricultural markets directly managed by farmers as points of sale for seasonal local products, since this is a means of ensuring a fair price for quality products, while also consolidating the link between the product and its locality of origin and encouraging consumers to make informed choices based on quality; believes the Member States should encourage the creation of marketing units where producers can directly introduce consumers to their products;
72. Calls for the establishment of programmes to promote sales on the local market, with a view to supporting local and regional processing and marketing initiatives; believes this could be achieved, for instance, by producers' cooperatives, in view of their contribution to enhancing added value in the countryside;
73. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With market globalisation and the severe crisis now affecting Europe, its agriculture included, one possible response on the part of the agricultural market is to place the emphasis on product quality.

EU quality policy can enhance competitiveness and create value added for Europe's regional economies: indeed, for many rural areas where production alternatives are few, it offers the one and only opportunity for development.

Quality policy cannot be dissociated from the CAP as a whole, nor can it stand aside from such new challenges as the fight against climate change, the need to preserve biodiversity, energy supply issues, the development of bioenergies and animal welfare, not to mention water management in agriculture, an area where society now requires improvements.

These complex issues, as well as consumers' growing expectations, need to be suitably incorporated in the future quality policy for agricultural products, on the basis of a concept of quality that is not limited or static but is linked to the major potentialities of a modern agriculture that is, in the European case, dynamic, rich and diversified and can offer not only high-quality food products but also services of great value to a constantly evolving society.

Your rapporteur welcomes the Commission communication and the incorporation of Parliament's recommendations following the debate on the Green Paper on agricultural product quality. He also hopes that the measures proposed by Parliament in the present report, which is the fruit of discussions and evaluations received by the representatives of the various associations in the sector, will be implemented as soon as possible.

In the first place, your rapporteur examines farming requirements and marketing standards. Consideration is given to the Commission's proposal for an EU quality logo, for products originating and processed solely in Europe. This logo would provide an umbrella for European products that meet European production standards, and could mark the formal recognition of the efforts of Europe's farmers to maintain high standards of production. It is suggested, therefore, that the Commission should undertake a study of the possibility of introducing such a logo, on a basis of respect for the quality criteria which are needed to ensure continued high standards.

With regard to the rules for marketing agricultural products, your rapporteur believes that they remain of major importance as a means of ensuring the transparency of market transactions and enabling purchasers, from wholesalers to consumers, to compare the price, measurements and quality of products and guarantee a level playing field in the Union.

Your rapporteur supports introducing, on an optional basis, new reserved terms such as 'mountain products' or 'low carbon content'. The definition of these terms should be harmonised at Community level.

Consumers often confuse the geographical indication of where a food product was processed with the place of origin of the agricultural product as such, and are often not aware of how the food chain operates.

Your rapporteur considers that only the compulsory indication of the place of production of the primary products can provide consumers with full information on the quality of the products they are buying, since products are subject to a production cycle which exerts considerable influence on their characteristics in terms of quality and food safety. He also hopes legislation will be introduced covering the indication of place of origin for processed food products.

In the second place, your rapporteur has examined the aspect of geographical indications and traditional specialities.

Geographical indications are of major importance for European agriculture, not only economically but also in ethical, environmental and social terms, in relation to the intimate links of the products with their locality and the conservation and development of the countryside in the context of tradition, history, taste and unique knowledge handed down over time. Your rapporteur therefore considers that the three existing systems for registration of geographical indications should continue in their present form.

With respect to the two instruments, PDO and PGI, your rapporteur proposes that these two systems for geographical indication continue to be kept separate, since to create a single protection system would be to fail to take account of the specific differences in the nature and closeness of the links between the products and their geographical area of production, as well as the different rules governing the production, processing and manufacture of agricultural products.

Your rapporteur believes that simplification of the rules is desirable where the aim is to cut red tape for enterprises, but that this should not bring about any reduction in the standards that have been achieved by European products thanks to considerable effort and investment.

On the subject of ex officio protection of geographical indications, as an obligation incumbent on the authorities of all Member States, your rapporteur favours the revision of Regulation 510/2006 and a definition of specific European procedures.

With regard to geographical indications of third countries, your rapporteur wishes to see greater protection of such indications, by means of inclusion in international registries and international recognition through the WTO system.

Finally, your rapporteur has examined the aspect of promotion and communication policies. He believes that in order to promote the Union's quality policy it is essential to undertake an intensive campaign of consumer education and information concerning the various European labels and the guarantees they represent, as a means of ensuring that quality policy succeeds.

Your rapporteur believes that agricultural product quality issues are crucial to ensuring that buyers and consumers are properly informed of product characteristics. The overall aim is to continue to guarantee that acquiring EU products means acquiring high-quality products originating in the diverse regional traditions of Europe.

28.1.2010

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on agricultural product quality policy: what strategy to follow?
(2009/2105(INI))

Rapporteur: Pilar Ayuso

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Calls for the strengthening of the EU's quality policy, since it represents a significant incentive for producers in the Union to improve their efforts in terms of quality, food safety and respect for the environment; believes this policy can help boost substantially the value added of the Union's agricultural and food production in an ever more globalised market;
2. Stresses the importance of quality production for the preservation of the economic, social and cultural fabric in numerous rural regions of Europe, as well as the need to preserve that heritage, especially in regions where production alternatives are few;
3. Regrets the fact that the Commission communication, on the grounds of a simplification which could prove counterproductive, has only partially taken on board the requirements specified by the sectors concerned following the publication of the Green Book;
4. Favours the preservation of the distinction between protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications, so as to avoid any levelling-down of the criteria to be met by European producers, while continuing to ensure strong local links; nonetheless supports all measures aimed at guaranteeing clear information for the European consumer;
5. Rejects the notion of merging the systems of registration of geographical indications for wines, spirits and foodstuffs, in view of the need to maintain the specific characteristics of each;

6. Considers that introducing different levels of protection for European quality designations could create unfairness, especially if the main criteria employed are economic; believes, therefore, that all geographical indications should enjoy the same degree of recognition;
7. Urges the Commission to negotiate the creation of an international registry of geographical indications under the WTO umbrella, and supports the Commission's intention to include geographical indications within the scope of the 'Anti-counterfeiting trade agreement' and in the work of the future 'European observatory on counterfeiting and piracy';
8. Emphasises that in the WTO negotiations the Commission must seek to secure an agreement on the 'non-trade concerns' which ensures that imported agricultural products meet the same EU requirements in the areas of food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection as those imposed on agricultural products produced in the EU;
9. Favours the voluntary indication of the origin of the raw materials which have gone into processed foods, while opposing the compulsory indication of the place of origin of agricultural products in processed and non-processed foods since this would saddle European industry with high costs which would be disproportionate to the potential value added generated by such a measure; is aware that European industry already has to meet strict labelling requirements in the interests of accurate consumer information; considers that the voluntary indication of the origin of the raw materials should not impede the internal market;
10. Considers that policy concerning agricultural product quality, for example on labelling, should be coherent with other relevant EU legislation; considers that agricultural product quality policy should be carried out in a manner that takes into account the costs of new policy, as well as the specificities of particular sectors, such as the processed agricultural goods sector;
11. Considers that Community marketing standards have a key role to play in the production chain, contributing to market transparency and fair competition rules while also helping consumers compare the price, dimensions and quality of products; calls, therefore, for the maintenance and strengthening of Community marketing standards, and believes that their determination should not be left in the hands of private bodies;
12. Regrets the fact that the Commission has already, in the face of the opposition of a majority of Member States, proceeded to the effective dismantling of the Community marketing standards in the fruit and vegetable sector, without awaiting the final outcome of the debate on the future of the EU's quality policy and thus pre-empting the decisions to be adopted by the Council and Parliament on the matter;
13. Considers that EU agricultural products meet a quality standard in themselves, since they are produced in accordance with EU legislative provisions concerning product quality, sustainable production and environmental and health criteria (cross-compliance); in addition, the cultural landscapes of Europe are preserved through the cultivation of agricultural products; given these requirements, a 'grown (produced, made) in Europe' quality label should be a possibility;

14. Welcomes the Commission's intention to create a new EU organic logo, in order to remove the barriers to trade in organic products within the single market; favours adopting the necessary initiatives to promote trade in organic products at international level; considers that products from third countries should fulfil the same requirements to be covered by the new EU organic logo and that controls should be strengthened;
15. Believes it is necessary to promote the voluntary labelling of other environment- and animal-friendly production methods, such as 'integrated production', 'outdoor grazing' and 'hill farming';
16. Considers that it is important to have uniform definitions for additional information provided, such as carbon footprint;
17. Believes that alternative methods of providing information, such as information via the Internet or on the receipt, should also be considered;
18. Welcomes the Commission's intention to introduce guidelines on best practice in cooperation with the interested parties, with a view to standardising private quality certifications as far as possible and thus facilitating producers' adaptation to the different regimes in force, introducing mutual recognition and reducing wherever possible the disparities between private and official certification systems, in such areas as environmental requirements;
19. Regrets the failure of the Commission's communication to mention the need to encourage promotion measures, given their importance for ensuring the profitability of European farmers' efforts in terms of quality, food safety and the environment; believes that the promotion instruments currently available to the EU need to be revised so as to improve their efficiency; proposes, in this connection, extending to the EU market the promotion aids recently introduced in the wine sector;
20. Welcomes the notion of creating new voluntary reserved terms such as 'mountain agriculture', and calls for this to be backed up by suitable consumer information campaigns.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	27.1.2010
Result of final vote	+: 51 -: 5 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	János Áder, Elena Oana Antonescu, Kriton Arsenis, Pilar Ayuso, Paolo Bartolozzi, Sandrine Bélier, Sergio Berlato, Milan Cabrnoch, Martin Callanan, Nessa Childers, Chris Davies, Bairbre de Brún, Esther de Lange, Bas Eickhout, Edite Estrela, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Karin Kadenbach, Christa Klauß, Jo Leinen, Corinne Lepage, Peter Liese, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Linda McAvan, Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė, Miroslav Ouzký, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Antonia Parvanova, Andres Perello Rodriguez, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Mario Pirillo, Pavel Poc, Vittorio Prodi, Oreste Rossi, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt, Carl Schlyter, Horst Schnellhardt, Richard Seeber, Theodoros Skylakakis, Bogusław Sonik, Catherine Soullie, Salvatore Tatarella, Åsa Westlund, Glenis Willmott, Marina Yannakoudakis
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Bill Newton Dunn, Crescenzo Rivellini, Renate Sommer, Struan Stevenson, Michail Tremopoulos, Anna Záborská

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	22.2.2010
Result of final vote	+: 34 -: 4 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Richard Ashworth, Liam Aylward, Christophe Béchu, José Bové, Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Lorenzo Fontana, Iratxe García Pérez, Martin Häusling, Esther Herranz García, Peter Jahr, Elisabeth Jeggle, Elisabeth Köstinger, Giovanni La Via, Stéphane Le Foll, George Lyon, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Gabriel Mato Adrover, Mairead McGuinness, Mariya Nedelcheva, James Nicholson, Rareş-Lucian Niculescu, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Georgios Papastamkos, Marit Paulsen, Britta Reimers, Giancarlo Scotta', Alyn Smith, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Marc Tarabella, Janusz Wojciechowski
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Salvatore Caronna, Spyros Danellis, Esther de Lange, Filip Kaczmarek, Hans-Peter Mayer, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves