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*Committee on Agriculture*

PROVISIONAL  
2004/2129(INI)

17.9.2004

## **DRAFT OPINION**

of the Committee on Agriculture

for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

on Parliament's opinion concerning the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe

Draftsman: Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The European Parliament has had to battle long and hard for codecision in the area of agriculture. Since the launch of the common agricultural policy almost half a century ago, the European Parliament and its Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development have played only an advisory role. Even today the Council of Agriculture Ministers may choose to ignore the opinion of the European Parliament and take charge of just under half of the Union's budget without any democratic scrutiny.

This democratic deficit has made necessary reforms impossible for decades and provoked major crises in public health, the environment and animal welfare. The BSE crisis would not have reached such catastrophic proportions if Parliament had been involved in the decisions on precautionary and control measures.

The European Parliament, and particularly the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, has never been able to accept this democratic deficit. Unofficially, it has often imposed a form of codecision with the Council by withholding its opinions and suspending dealings with the Commission. It is to be welcomed that, since the Amsterdam Treaty, the codecision procedure has at least been applied in the areas of environment, food safety and consumer protection. However, the common agricultural policy with its powerful instruments of the common organisation of the markets and investment and income subsidies is still not under the supervision of the only European institution to be directly elected and therefore democratically legitimate.

It is only with the European Convention's draft Constitution that greater democratic legitimacy has become a real prospect. This is in spite of strong opposition from some Member States fearing a reduction in national revenue from the EU budget. From now on, all basic decisions on agricultural policy will be subject to codecision by the European Parliament. However, in certain areas, in particular the setting of quotas, prices and quantitative restrictions, the draft Constitution proposes a worsening of the current situation: the Council is to decide on these matters without the involvement of the European Parliament. The compromise reached at the Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels is clearly a step in the right direction but does not provide for full codecision.

A significant shortcoming in the compromise reached in Brussels is that the objectives of the common agricultural policy decided upon half a century ago have been incorporated under Part III, Article III-123 of the draft Treaty completely unchanged. Today they are no longer compatible with the since much-reformed agricultural policy and provide no new impetus for the urgently needed support for the rural economy and the inclusion of environmental policy and animal welfare. Nor is there any sense in dealing with agricultural policy separately from rural development and relations with developing countries and other trade partners.

The compromise reached with regard to the draft Constitution represents progress with gaps that will have to be addressed in the future. However, these gaps do not call into question the success of European integration through a common Constitution. Parliament should do all it can during the forthcoming ratification process to make citizens aware of the advances the adoption of the Constitution will mean for them specifically. The common agricultural policy was and is a cornerstone of European integration and will remain so as long as it advocates

fair international trade relations with regard to food and raw materials abroad and takes up the new challenges of rural development and environmentally, economically and socially sustainable agriculture at home. This means making sure in particular that our resources are used in an environmentally friendly way, our farms remain economically viable, agricultural products are available to consumers at a reasonable price and that agricultural policy is acceptable both to farmers and to the whole of society.

## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture calls on the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the extension of codecision by the European Parliament to the common organisation of agricultural markets and the other provisions necessary for the objectives of the common agricultural policy to be realised; calls however for the gaps remaining in terms of codecision on agricultural policy, in particular in Articles III-126(2) and III-127(3), to be filled in the course of a future revision of the draft Constitution;
2. Regrets greatly in this regard that, under Article III-127(3), the matters previously subject to consultation, particularly the setting of quotas, prices and quantitative restrictions, are now to be decided by the Council alone, without Parliament's involvement; considers this to be counterproductive in view of the draft Constitution's otherwise visible tendency towards reducing the democratic deficit; reminds the Council that it will make use of its legislative powers to determine as far as possible the content of the conditions for regulating the matters referred to under Article III-127(3); repeats its demand that matters that have hitherto been subject to the consultation procedure and are considered under the section of the draft Constitution on agriculture, in particular Article III-127(3), to require a Council regulation or decision should in future only fall within the implementing power of the Commission if this is conferred upon it beforehand by Parliament and the Council by means of an act adopted under the codecision procedure;
3. Points out that the objectives of the common agricultural policy set out in Article III-123 are incompatible with the European Union's objectives as defined under Title I, Article 3; considers it to be essential, therefore, for the objectives of the CAP to be brought up to date in order to take into account the latest developments in this policy and, in particular, its multifunctional role with regard to farmers themselves, rural development, the environment and consumers;
4. Considers the following to be appropriate as regards the objectives of the common agricultural policy:

The objectives of the common agricultural policy shall be:

- (a) to support a multifunctional agriculture in the European Union compatible with the environment and landscape that promotes biological diversity, ensures the rational development of agricultural production through the sensible use of technical progress and encourages the optimum use of production factors, especially labour;
- (b) to guarantee the farming and rural population a comparable standard of living and a reasonable income, in particular by launching a rural development policy and increasing the individual earnings of people employed in agriculture;
- (c) to regulate and stabilise markets and avert crises;
- (d) to assure the availability of supplies;

- (e) to ensure that supplies reach consumers at reasonable prices;
  - (f) to promote the quality and safety of agricultural products and food;
5. Welcomes the removal of the distinction hitherto made in the budget between compulsory expenditure, which mainly concerned agriculture, and non-compulsory expenditure; considers that this represents a substantial widening of the European Parliament's budgetary powers.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe
<b>Procedure number</b>	2004/2129(INI)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	AFCO
<b>Enhanced cooperation</b>	–
<b>Draftsman:</b> Date appointed	Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf 26.7.2004
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	2.9.2004
<b>Date suggestions adopted</b>	
<b>Result of final vote</b>	for: against: abstentions:
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	
<b>Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	