

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

24 February 2000

FINAL
A5-0046/2000

REPORT

on the proposal for a Council regulation on information measures relating to
the common agricultural policy
(COM(1999)0536 – C5-0249/1999 – 1999/0209(CNS))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: María Izquierdo Rojo

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
majority of the votes cast
- **I Cooperation procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- **II Cooperation procedure (second reading)
majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position
- *** Assent procedure
majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and Article 7 of the EU Treaty
- ***I Codecision procedure (first reading)
majority of the votes cast
- ***II Codecision procedure (second reading)
majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend the common position
- ***III Codecision procedure (third reading)
majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission)

Abbreviations for committees

- I. AFET Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy
- II. BUDG Committee on Budgets
- III. CONT Committee on Budgetary Control
- IV. LIBE Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs
- V. ECON Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
- VI. JURI Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market
- VII. INDU Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy
- VIII. EMPL Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
- IX. ENVI Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy
- X. AGRI Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- XI. PECH Committee on Fisheries
- XII. REGI Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism
- XIII. CULT Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport
- XIV. DEVE Committee on Development and Cooperation
- XV. AFCO Committee on Constitutional Affairs
- XVI. FEMM Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities
- XVII. PETI Committee on Petitions

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 5 November 1999 the Council consulted Parliament, pursuant to Article 37 of the EC Treaty, on the proposal for a Council regulation on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (COM(1999)0536 - 1999/0209(CNS)).

At the sitting of 15 November 1999 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred this proposal to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development as the committee responsible and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy and the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport for their opinions (C5-0249/1999).

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development appointed María Izquierdo Rojo rapporteur at its meeting of 24 November 1999.

It considered the Commission proposal and draft report at its meetings of 24 November 1999, 26 January 2000, 31 January 2000 and 23 February 2000.

At the last meeting it adopted the draft legislative resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, chairman; Joseph Daul, Vincenzo Lavarra and Encarnación Redondo Jiménez, vice-chairmen; María Izquierdo Rojo, rapporteur; Gordon Adam, Danielle Auroi, María del Pilar Ayuso González (for Michl Ebner), Carlos Bautista Ojeda, Sergio Berlato, Giorgio Celli, Arlindo Cunha, Avril Doyle (for Francesco Fiori), Anne Ferreira (for Bernard Poignant), Christel Fiebiger, Georges Garot, Lutz Goepel, Willi Görlach, Elisabeth Jeggle, Salvador Jové Peres, Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert, Heinz Kindermann, Dimitrios Koulourianos, Albert Jan Maat, Xaver Mayer, Mikko Pesälä, Giovanni Procacci, Michel Raymond, María Rodríguez Ramos, Isidoro Sánchez García (for Niels Busk), Struan Stevenson, Robert William Sturdy and Ari Vatanen (for Neil Parish).

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport decided on 25 November 1999 not to deliver an opinion. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy decided on 7 December 1999 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 24 February 2000.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

Proposal for a Council regulation on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (COM(1999)0536 – C5-0249/1999 – 1999/0209(CNS))

The proposal is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the Commission ¹	Amendments by Parliament
(Amendment 1) Recital 4	
The <u>issues surrounding the common agricultural policy and its development</u> should be explained to both farmers and other parties directly concerned, as well as the general public.	The <u>objectives and possibilities for development of the common agricultural policy</u> should be explained to both farmers and other parties directly concerned, as well as the general public.
<i>Justification:</i>	
<i>The amendment makes the wording clearer and more specific. As well as the issues being explained, the possibilities for development should be discussed.</i>	
(Amendment 2) Recital 6	
Organisations representing those active in farming and in rural areas, particularly farmers' organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations play a vital role in informing their members about the common agricultural policy and relaying to the Commission the opinions of the parties concerned in general and farmers in particular.	Organisations representing those active in farming and in rural areas, particularly farmers' organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations, <u>as well as the rural information and activity centres</u> , play a vital role in informing their members about the common agricultural policy and relaying to the Commission the opinions of the parties concerned in general and farmers in particular. <u>With an ageing agricultural population, the important role played by young farmers should be taken into account.</u>

Justification:

¹ OJ C 376, 28.12.1999, p. 40

The European rural workshops (rural information and activity centres), which number more than 100 and are housed within other bodies with experience in the dissemination of information in rural society, were set up on an initiative of the Commission, with the specific purpose of publicising, in the countryside (which accounts for some 80% of the Union's territory), the details of Community agricultural policy and acting as a meeting-point and a venue for the exchange of views for all those operating at first hand in the agricultural sector.

Given the need to encourage young farmers to continue in farming, it is vitally important that they are well informed about the developments in the common agricultural policy.

Organisations such as the ECYF play an important role in informing young farmers, to ensure that they are well informed about the many developments that will impact on their farm businesses in future.

(Amendment 3)
Recital 7

Since the common agricultural policy is the first and most extensive of the Community's integrated policies, it should be explained to the general public. Other parties likely to be able to present information projects that will help achieve this goal should therefore be eligible to make proposals.

Since the common agricultural policy is the first and most extensive of the Community's integrated policies, it should be explained to the general public. Other suitable parties able to present information projects that will help achieve this goal should therefore be eligible to make proposals.

Justification:

The amendment makes the wording clearer and more specific.

(Amendment 4)
Recital 8a (new)

Stress should be laid on the importance of simplification and cutting through red tape, both in the examination of the programmes submitted and in the subsequent monitoring of them.

Justification

The aim should be to facilitate access to this budget heading for the associations mentioned in

Article 2. This would also reduce administrative costs for the associations.

(Amendment 5)
Article 1, first paragraph

The Community may finance information measures relating to the common agricultural policy that aim, in particular, at:

- (a) helping to explain, implement and develop this policy,
- (b) promoting the European model of agriculture and helping people understand it,

- (c) informing farmers and other parties active in rural areas,
- (d) raising public awareness of the issues and objectives of the CAP.

The Community may finance information measures and exchanges of views relating to the common agricultural policy that aim, in particular, at:

- (a) informing countrymen and women, farmers and other parties active in rural areas, and supporting them in their choices,
- (b) promoting the European model of agriculture and helping people understand it,
 - (ba) promoting debate on the CAP, identifying the problems and the potential of agriculture in the Community and means of improving the application of the CAP,
- (c) helping to explain, implement and develop this policy,
- (d) raising public awareness of the issues and objectives of the CAP.

Justification:

The first priority for these measures should be to inform countrymen and women about the development and new objectives of the CAP.

It is also important to promote debate on the CAP, identifying the problems and the potential of agriculture in the Community and possible means of improvement.

(Amendment 6)
Article 2(1)(a)

(a) annual work programmes presented, in particular, by farmers' or rural development organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations,

(a) annual work programmes presented, in particular, by farmers' or rural development organisations, consumers' associations and environmental protection associations, and by the rural information and activity centres. Special attention shall be given to young farmers' organisations.

Justification:

The 'European rural workshops' (rural information and activity centres) operate on the basis

of annual information and activity programmes. Their activities include - apart from local initiatives by individual centres - joint actions of large-scale importance. These latter involve partnership between several workshops, at both national and European level, and are made possible by networking among all the workshops.

(Amendment 7)
Article 2(2)

2. The maximum financing rate for the measures referred to in paragraph 1(a) and (b) shall be 75% of eligible costs.

2. The maximum financing rate for the measures referred to in paragraph 1(a) and (b) shall be 75% of eligible costs. Nevertheless, the Commission may increase that rate to finance programmes or measures submitted by organisations or associations with few financial means.

Justification:

The mandatory cofinancing rate should not be set up as an obstacle or social barrier which would prevent programmes or measures from being carried out by bodies or associations with few economic resources, for whom information measures may be particularly important.

(Amendment 8)
Article 3(1)

1. Measures eligible under Article 2 shall include, in particular, talks, seminars, publications, media actions and productions, participation in international events and programmes for the exchange of experiences.

1. Measures eligible under Article 2 shall include, in particular, talks, seminars, publications, media actions and productions, participation in international events, information visits and programmes for the exchange of experiences, including longer-term exchanges.

Justification:

Information visits should be added to the range of possible measures eligible for funding.

Exchange visits organised for individuals should also be eligible for financing within the budget line. Long-term exchanges, as foreseen in the PEJA programme, should be eligible for funding as they play an important part in informing young farmers and the wider public.

(Amendment 9)
Article 4

Community financing shall not exceed the annual appropriations decided by the budgetary authority.

Community financing shall not exceed the annual appropriations decided by the budgetary authority. In its proposal, the

Commission shall adapt the budgetary allocation to the large number of organisations entitled to participate under this Regulation.

Justification:

The CAP is a policy in constant evolution (changes to the COMs, reforms still to be implemented, etc), and the organisations and associations thus have to make a major effort to provide information to their members. Initiatives such as the present one must therefore be funded at an appropriate level. The sum of EUR 3 m for the annual programmes, as indicated in paragraph 7.1 of the financial statement attached to this proposal, is not adequate. Agriculture in the Union varies enormously. In Article 2, the Commission proposes the possibility of access to these programmes for consumer groups and environmental associations; this facility could, if funding from the budget is not at a sufficient level, adversely affect access for farmers' organisations, which are, after all, the channels through which the programmes will reach the farmers.

(Amendment 10)
Article 5a (new)

5a. When laying down implementing measures for this Regulation, the Commission shall define the criteria to be met by programmes or measures eligible for funding, which must be geared to explaining and helping people visualise the priority objectives for agriculture in 2000, such as:

- fostering sustainable and multifunctional farming,
- maintaining and creating jobs,
- promoting social and regional cohesion,
- giving a more prominent role to women and young people,
- caring for the environment and securing the water supply, ensuring air and soil quality, treating agricultural waste and mastering energy expenditure in the countryside and in transport,
- promoting rural development,
- improving food safety and product quality.

Justification:

Information measures need to be brought together. Even though there are wide variations

between the different events and participants involved, there should be some common objectives which would help to explain and make it easier to visualise the priority objectives for agriculture in 2000.

Information policy must be harmonised in detail, in the interests of ensuring a sustainable agriculture that respects the environment in all aspects.

(Amendment 11)
Article 7

The Commission, where it judges it to be appropriate, shall evaluate the measures financed under this Regulation.

The Commission, shall, regularly and at the request of the European Parliament, evaluate the measures financed under this Regulation.

Justification:

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures should be carried out in every case.

Irrespective of the biennial report to the European Parliament, Parliament should be able to request an assessment of the measures at any time.

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council regulation on information measures relating to the common agricultural policy (COM(1999)0536 – C5-0249/1999 – 1999/0209(CNS))

(Consultation procedure)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(1999)0536¹),
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 37 of the EC Treaty (C5-0249/1999),
 - having regard to Rule 67 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A5-0046/2000),
1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;
 2. Calls on the Commission to amend its proposal accordingly, pursuant to Article 2(2) of the EC Treaty;
 3. Calls on the Council to notify Parliament should it intend to depart from the text approved by Parliament;
 4. Asks to be consulted again if the Council intends to amend the Commission proposal substantially;
 5. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

¹ OJ C 376, 28.12.1999, p. 40