

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4990/06
by Czesław Siekierski (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Simplification of the common agricultural policy

The laws relating to EU agricultural policy account for almost half of Community legislation. They are too extensive and complicated and not at all comprehensible or clear to farmers, taxpayers or consumers. The constant changes resulting from the successive reforms of the common agricultural policy have led not only to greater bureaucracy but have, most importantly, given rise to criticism as to the purpose of these reforms. Furthermore, support for the CAP among EU citizens is on the constant decline.

It is necessary, therefore, to set about simplifying the provisions and mechanisms of the CAP and reducing bureaucracy. These improvements should not affect the reform of the common agricultural policy, such as the reduction in funding for agriculture and rural development. Perhaps a Commission proposal to amalgamate all the sectoral regulations covering 21 common market organisations in a single piece of legislation would achieve the necessary simplification.

The 'health check' planned for 2008 would provide a good opportunity to review Community legislation. At the same time, it would be worthwhile to look at the direct payments systems in the EU-27 and to consider the possibility of harmonising and simplifying them, as, at present, no two Member States use the same system. It is difficult, therefore, to talk about equal competitiveness on the internal market.

The simplified system of direct payments currently in operation in Poland adheres to the principles of the 2003 CAP reform in terms of the decoupling of support from production. With a clear legal basis, the system is comprehensible to farmers and easy for payment agencies to use.

Given that Commissioner Fischer Boel has called for simpler agricultural provisions, it is justifiable to allow the EU-8, including Poland, to benefit from the single area payment scheme (SAPS) not only for an additional two years, until the end of 2010, but until the end of the current Financial Perspective, i.e. until 2013 inclusive. It should be considered whether or not the entire Union should adopt a harmonised payments system based on the one currently in use in Poland.

Is it possible to extend the period of application of the SAPS for the new Member States until the end of 2013?

On what basis did the Commission extend the period of application by only two years when in the explanatory memorandum to the proposal for a Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003¹ it itself points to the need for '...the possibility for the new Member States using the single area payment scheme to continue to use this simple way of granting income support to the farmers...?'

¹ OJ L 270, 21.10.2003, p. 1.