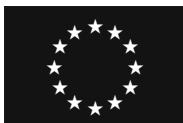


EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Regional Development

2008/2066(INI)

26.6.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the situation and prospects of agriculture in mountainous regions
(2008/2066(INI))

Draftswoman: Bernadette Bourzai

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development 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. Stresses that Article 158 of the Treaty establishing the European Community on cohesion policy, as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon, identifies mountain regions as suffering from severe and permanent handicaps, whilst acknowledging their diversity, and calls for particular attention to be paid to such areas; regrets, however, that the Commission has not yet been able to draw up a comprehensive strategy to support effectively mountain regions and other regions suffering from permanent natural handicaps, despite numerous requests to that effect from the European Parliament;
2. Stresses the need for good coordination on the ground of the various Community policies aimed at ensuring harmonious development, particularly for regions, such as mountain regions, that suffer from permanent natural handicaps; is concerned, in this connection, about the usefulness of separating the Community's cohesion policy from rural development in the current programming period 2007-2013 (resulting from the integration of the European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development into the CAP); considers that this new approach needs to be monitored closely in order to evaluate its impact on regional development;
3. Points out that mountain regions suffer handicaps which make it less easy for agriculture to adapt to competitive conditions and entail extra costs so that it cannot produce very competitive products at low prices;
4. Proposes that in the context of the Green Paper on territorial cohesion, to be adopted in autumn 2008, and in keeping with the objectives of the territorial agenda and the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Commission should, in cooperation with the Member States, adopt a territorial approach to address the problems in different types of mountain territories and make provision for such measures within the next legislative package on the Structural Funds ;
5. Would like the Commission to develop a genuine European integrated strategy for mountains and considers the publication of a Green Paper on mountains to be an important first step in that direction; calls on the Commission to launch a wide ranging public consultation involving regional and local authorities, socio-economic and environmental actors, as well as national and European associations representing regional authorities in mountain regions, in order to better identify the situation in these regions;
6. Calls on the Commission, in the context of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network work programme, to pay special attention to the situation of regions that are beset by permanent natural handicaps, such as mountain regions; considers that a sound and thorough knowledge of the situation as regards mountain regions is essential in order to be able to draw up differentiated measures that better address the problems of these regions;

7. Urges greater coordination of rural development and structural support and the development of common programmes;
8. Points out that mountain regions can provide quality agricultural produce and more diversity of agricultural products in the European market, preserve certain animal and vegetable species, uphold traditions and foster industrial and tourist activities and can combat climate change by protecting biodiversity and capturing CO₂ through permanent grassland and forests and that sustainable forestry exploitation will make it possible to produce energy using wood residues;
9. Stresses the importance of the issue of water management in mountain areas and calls on the Commission to encourage local and regional authorities to develop a sense of solidarity between downstream and upstream users, including through appropriate funding to support the sustainable use of water resources in these areas;
10. Stresses that these regions are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and calls upon the Commission, the Member States and the competent regional and local authorities to promote the immediate implementation of measures to provide protection against natural disasters, in particular forest fires, in these regions;
11. Points out that mountain regions require new means of protecting their territory against flooding (with an emphasis on flood prevention), whilst farmers and foresters can support anti-flooding preventive measures by means of the direct area-related payments which they receive under the CAP;
12. Points out that thorough, comprehensive anti-erosion protection for soil, buildings and the conservation of aquifers must be provided as a constituent part of farming and forestry practice in order to minimise the risks of flooding and soil erosion and to prevent drought and forest fires, and also for the purpose of increasing the supply of groundwater and surface water in the countryside;
13. Stresses the significance of introducing an integrated approach to decision-making and administrative procedures such as regional planning, the licensing of construction projects and the refurbishment of dwellings by means of environmental, heritage and urban-planning practices, with a view to ensuring sustainable development in mountain regions; recommends that the potential of mountain regions should be exploited in order to promote the comprehensive development of tourism and the use of innovation in land development and, to that end, encourages local, decentralised initiatives and cooperation between mountain regions;
14. Advises the Member States to improve the structure of and the procedures for the provision of financial assistance intended to support the development of mountainous regions and at the same time to simplify administrative procedures and access to resources intended to support the protection and sustainable use of territorial assets: the cultural heritage and natural and human resources;
15. Considers that sustainable, modernised and multifunctional agriculture is necessary in mountain areas for maintaining other activities, such as the exploitation of bio-mass and agri-tourism, thus increasing the incomes of local people and calls on the Commission

and Council to take account specifically, in the CAP and in regional policy, of the needs of mountain regions: the arrival of new farmers, compensation of extra costs linked to the problem of inaccessibility, for example with regard to milk collection, the maintenance of services in rural areas and the development of transport infrastructure, etc;

16. Stresses that exceptions and special support measures must be confined to particularly disadvantaged areas and not be allowed to lead to distortions of competition in agricultural markets;
17. Is convinced that priority should be given to maintaining sufficient population density in mountain regions and of the need for measures to combat desertification and to attract new people;
18. Stresses the importance of ensuring a high level of services of general economic interest, of improving the accessibility and interconnection of mountain areas and of providing the necessary infrastructure, particularly as regards passenger and freight transport, education, the knowledge-based economy and communication networks (including broad band access) in order to facilitate connections with upland markets and urban areas; calls on the competent authorities to promote public-private partnerships for these purposes;
19. Considers it necessary to invest in local, advanced training centres in agricultural economy for mountain areas, so as to train professionals with the ability to manage activities in a mountain environment, protect the land and develop agriculture.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	25.6.2008
Result of final vote	+: 44 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Emmanouil Angelakas, Stavros Arnaoutakis, Jean Marie Beaupuy, Rolf Berend, Jana Bobošíková, Victor Boştinaru, Wolfgang Bulfon, Antonio De Blasio, Petru Filip, Gerardo Galeote, Iratxe García Pérez, Eugenijus Gentvilas, Ambroise Guellec, Jim Higgins, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Rumiana Jeleva, Tunne Kelam, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Sérgio Marques, Miroslav Mikolášik, James Nicholson, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Maria Petre, Markus Pieper, Giovanni Robusti, Wojciech Roszkowski, Elisabeth Schroedter, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Oldřich Vlasák
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Bernadette Bourzai, Jan Březina, Jill Evans, Emanuel Jardim Fernandes, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Francisca Pleguezuelos Aguilar, Zita Pleštinská, Samuli Pohjamo, Christa Prets, Richard Seeber, László Surján, Iuliu Winkler
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Glenis Willmott