Future of the sheep/lamb and goat sector in Europe

2007/2192(INI) - 19/06/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 492 votes to 30, with 9 abstentions, a resolution on the future of the sheep/lamb and goat sector in Europe.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Liam **AYLWARD** (UEN, IE) on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

The resolution recognises the urgent need for action to be taken by the Commission and the Council of Agriculture Ministers to ensure a profitable and sustainable future for sheepmeat and goatmeat production in the EU, to encourage the consumption of such products once more, and to retain and attract young sheep and goat farmers to the sector.

MEPs call on the Commission and the Council of Agriculture Ministers to direct additional financial support, as a matter of urgency, to EU sheep and goat producers in order to develop a vibrant, self-sufficient, market-led and consumer-orientated sheep and goat sector in the EU. They also call for the possibility of introducing Community financing for the establishment of the system of electronic identification for sheep, intended for the end of 2009, due to the high costs and difficulties in implementing this system. The Commission and the Council are called upon to examine the future of the sector as part of the CAP 'Health Check', giving each Member State the flexibility of choosing from the following possible options for funding, while not overlooking the need to avoid distortion of competition on the internal market:

- introduction of a new Environmental Sheep Maintenance Scheme per ewe to be either a) financed directly by EU funding or b) co-financed by EU and National Governments to stop the decline in production; such funding would be linked to the positive environmental attributes associated with the maintenance of sheep production as well as achieving improvements in technical and quality areas of production;
- analysis of the availability and utilisation of unused funds under Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy, with a view to redirecting that support to the sheep and goat sectors;
- amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003, as part of the CAP 'Health Check', so that Member States can allocate up to 12% of their national payments to measures to support sectors in difficulty and to maintain agriculture in less favoured areas;
- inclusion of measures in support of sheep and goat producers among the new challenges arising from the CAP 'Health Check' under the second pillar, with the possibility of using Modulation support funds.

MEPs note that the return to the producer for sheepmeat products as a percentage of the retail price is insufficient and draws attention to the Parliament's Written Declaration on the need to investigate and remedy the abuse of power by large supermarkets operating in the European Union. They call on the Commission to investigate the sheepmeat and goatmeat supply chain to ensure that farmers receive a fair return from the marketplace.

The Parliament calls on the EU negotiating team at the World Trade Organisation talks to reduce the scale of the proposed tariff cuts on sheep-meat and to ensure that the option of sensitive product status for sheep-meat products is available to the EU. The European Commission is also called upon to:

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foster a climate of direct sales by producers and producer organisations in order to limit artificial increases in price;

- introduce an additional payment for rare traditional and regional breeds of sheep and goat in order to maintain biodiversity in agriculture and to preserve sheep in sensitive areas;
- allow 14 days' notice to livestock farmers for on-farm cross-compliance inspections;
- introduce a mandatory EU labelling regulation system for sheep-meat products, which would have an EU-wide logo, to allow consumers to distinguish between EU products and those from third countries;
- improve its ability to respond to animal diseases and to reassess existing import quota management regimes to ensure that EU-produced lamb is not exposed to unfair competition;
- ensure funding for EU sheepmeat and to change, simplify and streamline the practical rules governing the operation of the budget so that lamb products can be given meaningful access to the budget;
- undertake, at Community level, a communication campaign targeted at consumers as a whole, stressing the nutritional and health benefits of the products concerned and boosting consumption;
- bring forward proposals on price transparency in the sector in order to provide information to consumers and producers on product prices.

Lastly, the resolution stresses the need to improve the availability of medicinal and veterinary products for the sheep and goat sectors at EU level through support for pharmaceutical research and the simplification of marketing authorisations. The Commission is called upon to include the sheep and goat sector in the second programme of Community action in the field of health (2008-13).