EC/Switzerland agreement: trade in agricultural products

2008/0202(CNS) - 07/11/2008 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve an Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation amending the Agreement on trade in agricultural products.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: the Commission recently adopted a proposal for a decision aiming to amend the EC-Swiss Agreement on the exchange of agricultural products (see AVC/2008/0163).

To recall, the Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on trade in agricultural products entered into force on 1 June 2002 (see AVC/1999/0108) and provided for some reciprocal tariff concessions regarding agricultural products and for the removal of a series of technical barriers to trade.

Since 2002, a number of amendments have been made to the Agreement following decisions by the Joint Veterinary Committee to take account of the changes to the acquis and Swiss legislation. The Commission decided to amend this Agreement in August 2008 on particular issues (see AVC/2008/0168). However, Annex 11 needs to be updated and amended which is the purpose of this proposal.

CONTENT: the Swiss Confederation has undertaken to include in its national legislation the provisions of:

- Council Directive 91/496/EEC laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on animals entering the Community from third countries and amending Directives 89/662/EEC, 90/425/EEC and 90/675/EEC;
- Council Directive 97/78/EC laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the Community from third countries;
- Council Directive 2002/99/EC laying down the animal health rules governing the production, processing, distribution and introduction of products of animal origin for human consumption;
- Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules, and all the provisions adopted for their implementation in the control of imports from third countries into the European Union;
- Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 on the animal health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals and amending Council Directive 92/65/EEC.

The provisions of Annex 11 to the Agreement on Agriculture should be adapted accordingly.

Procedure: in accordance with Article 5(2) of the Agreement on Agriculture, the amendment procedure laid down in Article 11 thereof does not apply to Annex 11. Consequently, any amendment to Annex 11 must be approved by means of a procedure identical to the procedure for the Agreement on Agriculture (assent given from the European Parliament).

The provisional application of this Decision, pending the completion of the internal procedures of the Parties, allows account to be taken of the changes resulting from amendments to the Appendices of Annex 11 and of the discontinuation of veterinary inspections at borders from 1 January 2009.

It should be noted that the amendment will not entail any financial implications.