Resolution on the Agreement between the EU and Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products and fishery products

2012/2522(RSP) - 16/02/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 398 to 175 with 50 abstentions a resolution on the Agreement between the EU and Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products and fishery products.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, EPP, ALDE, and ECR groups.

General considerations: Parliament believes that the opening-up of markets and progressive integration into the EU's internal market can help alleviate the widespread poverty and unemployment in southern Mediterranean countries and that, if this potential is to be realised, the EU must be prepared to make sufficient trade concessions. Morocco has taken significant steps to consolidate democracy by reforming its constitution and conducting fair elections, an in that connection, Members welcome the agreement as a positive step in supporting political stabilization. Members note that the **EU has a substantial agricultural and fisheries trade surplus with the southern Mediterranean countries** of over EUR 4 billion, but a bilateral agricultural, fisheries and processed food goods trade deficit with Morocco which amounted to EUR 871 million in 2010.

Parliament considers it essential that trade and investment initiatives should seek to benefit all sections of society and be targeted more specifically at SMEs and small farmers, and notes that over 80 % of Morocco's farmers hold less than five hectares of land. It therefore welcomes the support of the Confédération marocaine de l'agriculture et du développement rural (Comader - Moroccan Federation for Agriculture and Rural Development) for the agreement.

The agreement: given the importance and influence of the agricultural sector in Morocco, **the agreement will play a key role in the country's economic development and its political stabilisation,** since it offers new opportunities for exports to the EU. Members note that agriculture accounts for between 15 % and 20 % of Morocco's GDP, 12 % of Moroccan exports and 38 % of the Moroccan workforce, with peaks of 75 % in rural areas. The proposed agreement liberalises with immediate effect 55 % of tariffs on Morocco's agricultural and fisheries products (rising from 33 %) and 70 % of tariffs on the EU's agricultural and fisheries products within 10 years (rising from 1 %), which will benefit EU exporters and save an estimated EUR 100 million per year in customs duties once fully implemented.

However, Parliament highlights concerns regarding the following:

- **increased duty-free quotas for sensitive fruit and vegetable imports**: Members note the concerns expressed by certain EU sectors at increased duty-free quotas for sensitive fruit and vegetable imports, and it calls on the Commission to present an assessment of the impact on European producers, and particularly on farmers' incomes, and to keep Parliament regularly informed;

- **entry price system**: Parliament notes the constant complaints from European industry groups alleging fraud in the entry-price system, and asks for guarantees that the increased tariff quotas

under the agreement will be properly regulated by the EU and that there will be no misinterpretation of the rules governing the implementation of the entry-price mechanism. It emphasises that European operators have made complaints to OLAF and to Parliament's Committee on Petitions and that that committee has asked the Commission to change the entry-price system in order to put a stop to fraud. Members note the proposals to bring the rules governing implementation of the entry-price system into line with the Community Customs Code as part of the latest reform of the common agricultural policy, and feel that this must be accompanied by changes to the implementing regulation on the common organisation of agricultural markets to introduce effective control measures.

Parliament also calls on the Commission to ensure that the agreement is **fully consistent with international law and benefits all the local population groups affected.**

Broader trade and economic issues: recalling that all agricultural goods from all third countries imported into the EU must comply with the Union's sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) rules, Parliament welcomes the emphasis in the agreement on SPS measures, and calls for technical assistance to be central to the negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). It asks the Commission to **promote equivalency of measures** and controls between Morocco and the European Union in the area of **environmental and food safety standards,** in order to guarantee fair competition between the two markets.

Members also call for continued EU support for the improvement of production methods, through the sharing of best practice, and for Morocco's efforts in the area of water conservation.

Lastly, the resolution recognises that Morocco has ratified most of the relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and recently adopted legislation to outlaw child labour. It emphasises, nevertheless, that **there is still room for improvement regarding freedom of association and child labour,** and considers that the provisions of the DCFTAs should include assistance with the implementation of ILO conventions and the ratification of unsigned core ILO conventions, e.g. No 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and initiatives on corporate social responsibility as part of the sustainable development chapter.