

Promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products: what strategy for promoting the tastes of Europe

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted an own-initiative report by José BOVÉ (Greens/EFA, FR) on promotion measures and information provision for agricultural products in response to the Commission's communication on the subject.

The report supports the main objectives defined in the Commission's communication, namely to create higher European added value in the food sector, a more appealing and assertive policy strategy, simpler management and greater synergy between different promotion instruments.

Members consider that **equal attention** should be given to internal and external market promotion policy. They highlight the fact that, on the internal market, general and sustained promotion is required in order to ensure that European consumers are informed about the characteristics and added value of the European agricultural products they find on the market. They stress that, on the external market, there is a need to maintain and boost market share for European agricultural products and to target new emerging markets in order to find new outlets for these products.

The committee responsible however calls for the **objectives of EU promotion policy to be clearer and adequately defined** and stresses that promotion activities should cover all agri-food products that meet European quality standards. It considers that the **budget for improved information and promotion measures should be significantly increased**, taking account of the most recent objectives of information and promotion policy, notably for the horizontal promotion scheme. It also insists on the need to organise comprehensive consumer **information campaigns** in the EU and on external markets regarding production quality standards and certification systems.

Local, regional, internal and external markets: Members note that the EU's information and promotion policy should have three main objectives:

- in local and regional markets it should highlight the diversity and freshness of products and the proximity between producers and consumers, with a view to the economic revitalisation and social enhancement of rural life;
- in the internal market it should reap the full benefits of the European area without borders and its 500 million consumers, with a view to boosting production and stimulating the consumption of European products;
- in external markets it should exploit the high standards followed by the European production model in order to obtain greater value-added for the agri-food sector.

For local and regional markets, the report proposes that the European Commission **develops short supply chains** in local and regional markets, thereby creating new opportunities for farmers and other producers in rural areas and for associations of farmers and/or farmers and other operators in rural areas, and that it should design a broad set of instruments to promote the development of rural areas.

As regards the internal market, Members propose that the Commission does more **to support the efforts being made by European producers** to acquire the necessary capacity to meet higher consumer demand. They therefore call for the expansion of programmes geared to either markets or target products, and for the associated promotion tools to focus on the specific characteristics of production standards, always highlighting the European production model and European quality systems in particular.

With respect to external markets, Members consider it is therefore vital to **invest in promotion programmes**. These programmes should be preceded by market studies in third countries, for which co-financing should be available; believes that consideration should also be given to the possibility of supporting pilot projects in third countries that have been identified as potential new markets.

The Commission is called upon to **raise consumer awareness** of the fact that European agricultural standards are the most demanding in the world in terms of quality, safety, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, etc., which affects the final price of the product. Consumers should be provided with transparent information on how European products and their characteristics can be identified, in order to avoid the risk of purchasing counterfeit products.

Origin and quality: Members believe that quality products are those that are linked to specific production methods, geographical origins, traditions or cultural contexts. They call for a **new 'local farming and direct sale'scheme** to cover local quality products intended for consumption in the region where they are produced.

The report takes the view that the **indication of European origin** should prevail as the main identity in all promotion and information activities, both in the internal market and in third countries. Members consider it vital to ensure **more effective protection for products subject to quality standards** vis-à-vis EU trading partners. They call for the full inclusion of geographical indications and wider protection for them under bilateral and interregional trade agreements and at World Trade Organisation level.

The report also stresses the need to: i) amend the funding framework provisions for the promotion of products subject to quality standards with a view to increasing EU financial involvement; ii) more active stimulation of the production and promotion of organic products; and iii) promote local products from mountain and island areas and to step up EU funding for this purpose.

Lastly, the Commission is asked to:

- take steps to encourage all Member States to place greater emphasis on the **educational character of national school fruit and school milk schemes** and to integrate the School Fruit and School Milk Schemes fully into the second pillar of agricultural support;
- assess the implementation in the EU market of **information campaigns targeted at the adult population on the responsible consumption of European quality wines**.