

Fruit and vegetables: common organisation of the market COM

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At its meetings in October, November and December, the Council analysed the Commission proposal on the basis of the work carried out by the Special Committee on Agriculture and by the Working Party on Fruit and Vegetables. Today's debate and, in particular, the positive statements from the Commissioner, augur well for a rapid conclusion of this dossier. The Council congratulated the members of the SCA and the Working Party as well as the Commission services on the effort and devotion demonstrated, which have contributed to a clearer understanding of the scope of the Commission's proposal and to the identification of problems that this proposal raises at the delegations. No decisions can be reached in advance of the opinion of Parliament. It is, however, useful at this stage for the Presidency to set out the key issues on which compromises will be needed, as a means of targeting the technical work to be carried out in the Special Committee on Agriculture and its Working Group, and the Council's work under the Italian Presidency.

1. Producers' groups - It is a central principle of the Commission proposal that the producers' organisations should deal with all the produce of their members, so as to allow the groups themselves to define priorities. The question arises, however, whether without damage to this objective, some degree of specialisation might be permitted, for example by providing for groups dealing exclusively with fruit and exclusively with vegetables, as indeed the Commissioner suggested. - The question arises whether the transitional period for the creation of the new producers' organisations should be the same as the transitional period for the full adoption of the reduced prices fixed for withdrawals. - The question needs to be addressed as to whether the limit of 10% in the percentage of the revolving fund that may be spent on withdrawals could cause practical problems of implementation. An issue that should be examined is whether an alternative means could be found of achieving the objective that withdrawal should be an increasingly less important part of the tasks and objectives of producers' groups. - In order to enable the producer groups to begin to work more easily, the question of paying advances, subject - as the Commissioner has stated - to the constitution of adequate guarantees, deserves examination. Similarly, the possibility of providing a somewhat higher level of Community financing of the revolving fund to assist the development of producers' groups in the region where they are at present least advanced should be examined. The Commissioner's open attitude for that suggestion should be emphasised.
2. Interprofessional organisations This proposal represents an important part of the total package but is subject to strong objections from some delegations. The implication of applying here the compromise solution that was applied in the case of tobacco, or the system proposed for wine should be examined.
3. Intervention system All delegations believe that withdrawal should not be the normal destination of production. The question that will need to be further examined is the way in which this objective can be achieved whilst still providing an adequate safety net.