

Agenda 2000: CEEC applicant countries, pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural development SAPARD

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Following on from the outcome of the Berlin Summit (23.03.1999) and the overall agreement reached between the Fifteen on Agenda 2000, this text constitutes the Council's consolidated version regarding Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the pre-accession period (2000-2006). With respect to the most important amendments introduced by the Council, it should be noted that aid will be very strictly linked to the conditions laid down by the accession partnerships of the countries concerned and that particular priority is given to consumer protection, in the framework of the eligible actions. The Council, furthermore, introduced some modifications regarding the programming of actions by insisting on transparency of financial flows transferred in the beneficiary States. It also demanded that the plans of the countries concerned pay special attention to the improvement of markets, to quality and hygiene standards, as well as to actions seeking to create new jobs in rural areas. It also insisted on ensuring that the measures financed are in line with the objectives of the CAP, in particular the common organisation of markets and the objectives of the Structural Funds, so that these measures do not give rise to distortions on the national markets of the countries concerned. The Council set the maximum rate of the Community contribution at the level initially foreseen by the Commission : a maximum of 75% of eligible public expenditures. Lastly, the Council provided clarification about measures regarding the redistribution of aid when a beneficiary State loses its right, as a result of accession, to benefit from this Fund. It should be noted that the Berlin Summit set for indicative purposes at EUR 520 million per year the amount of pre-accession aid for agriculture over the 2000-2006 period.