Forests: protection against atmospheric pollution (amend. regul. 3528/86/EEC)

1996/0185(CNS) - 10/07/1996

PREVIOUS COMMUNITY LEGISLATION: Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3528/86 of 17 November 1986 on the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution, extended for a further five years in 1992 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2157/92 of 23 July 1992 which expires on 31 December 1996. (b) Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3529 of 21 November 1986 extended and strengthened by Regulation 2158/92 on protection of the Community's forests against fire which expires on 31 December 1996. PREVIOUS POSITION OF EP: (a) Legislative resolution A3-0223/92 (OJ C 241, 21.9.1992) embodying the EP's opinion of the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(91)431 final) for a regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 3528/86 on protecting the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution. VALVERDE LOPEZ report A3-0223/92 of 18 June 1992. (b) Legislative resolution A3-0242/92 (OJ C 241, 21.9.1992) embodying the EP's opinion of the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(91)431 final) on a regulation on protection of the Community's forests against fire. DE LOS SANTOS LOPEZ report A3-0242/92 of 29 June 1992. Generally speaking, the EP, as evidenced by the reports and resolutions aforementioned, approved the Commission's proposals on protection of forests, but criticized the financial arrangements proposed by the Commission, viewing them as a bare minimum for atmospheric pollution and inadequate for fire-prevention. Furthermore, in the case of protection of forests against fire, the Council took no account of Parliament's proposed amendments and actually reduced the funding. SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATES: (a) The aim is to protect the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution. Damage to forests is, essentially, the result of air pollution caused by large industrial complexes and unfavourable meteorological conditions. The combined action of the biotic disturbance caused by these two factors results in defoliation and the discolouration of leaves. Under Regulation (EC) No. 3528/86, amended by Regulation (EEC) No. 2157 /92, a system of monitoring of forest condition has been established, composed of large-scale periodic inventories, intensive monitoring of forest ecosystems and pilot projects and experiments in the field. From 1987 to 1996, the Community helped the Member States to implement this action, co-funding over 430 projects, with aid totalling ECU 42 million. (b) The aim of Community action on the protection of forests against fire is to help Member States to prevent forest fires, which principally affect the EU's southern Member States, where some 500 000 hectares are ravaged every year. Regulation 2158/92/EEC provides for: - concentrating Community preventive measures in areas at risk from fire, - asking Member States to submit to the Commission their overall forest-fire protection plans, and reserving Community financing to projects provided for in the plans, - creating a Community system of information on forest fires. Over the five years of implementation, a total of ECU 63 million has been granted to 480 fire-prevention projects forming part of overall protection plans.