Generalized tariff preferences GSP: application of the scheme to agricultural products of developping countries, 1996-99

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The ESC welcomes the intention to undertake a reform of the GSP, which will include the agricultural sector. The ESC stresses the need for differential treatment of agricultural products depending on their sensitivity. The ESC thinks attention should be paid to certain special cases, so that the interests of EU producers can also be taken into account. The ESC supports the introduction of a graduation and solidarity mechanism (Article 4). Developing countries which have reached a higher standard in terms of their GNP and export capacity should gradually be taken out of the preference scheme, so that they can be treated as industrial countries. The ESC considers that there is no need to wait for serious difficulties to actually occur before introducing protective measures; the mere threat of such a difficulty is sufficient. The ESC considers that the social, environmental and withdrawal clauses (Article 7) are necessary. The ESC also makes some comments of a more specific nature which emphasise the need for greater consistency in EU trading policy.