Agenda 2000: raw tobacco, reform of the common organisation of the market COM (amend. regul. 2075/92/EEC)

1998/0027(CNS) - 03/06/1998

The Committee has adopted the report by Raúl ROSADO FERNANDES (UFE, P). The report calls for changes entailing a variation of EU aid in line with product quality, greater flexibility and simplicity in the setting of quotas, stricter control procedures and improved observance of public health and environmental protection requirements. The common organisation of the market in tobacco (COM) contains rules on a system of premiums, measures on guiding and limiting production, and rules on trading with non-EU countries. The maximum overall guarantee threshold for the Community is 350 600 tonnes of raw leaf tobacco per Harvest. The Commission is proposing that, within that quantity, the Council should set individual guarantee thresholds for each variety group for three consecutive harvests. The Agriculture Committee wants the Council to set these thresholds for four consecutive harvests. Member States would be responsible for distributing the production quotas among their producers, in proportion to the average amounts delivered for processing over the three years preceding the last harvest year. As regards the premiums to be paid, these would consist of a fixed component, plus a variable component depending on quality. While the Commission would make the variable component account for between 35% and 45% of the premium, the Agriculture Committee believes it should not exceed 25% of the total. The Committee is also calling for the creation of an interprofessional institute to establish objective quality criteria for classification, in cooperation with the Commission. In addition, it wishes to see a Community Tobacco Fund set up, financed by a deduction of 1% of the premium. The deduction might be increased to 2% of the premium following an annual assessment of the operation and utilisation of the fund (the Commission proposes 2% from the outset). Lastly, the committee calls for measures to facilitate voluntary departures from the tobacco-growing sector by individual producers. It believes that a system should be set up to allocate any quotas thus released to a national "reserve", so that young farmers from poorer regions could then be enabled to move into tobacco growing. The Commission is instead proposing to set up a quota buy-back programme with a corresponding reduction of the guarantee thresholds.