

Agenda 2000: wine, reform of the common organisation of the market COM

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The Committee adopted by a very large majority the report by Philippe MARTIN (UFE, F) on the common organisation of the market in wine. Over 500 amendments were tabled but on the main points the committee followed the rapporteur, who takes a different view from the Commission on a number of fundamental points. The rapporteur hopes that the procedures under Article 43 of the Treaty will be followed. This provides for a Council decision, after consultation of Parliament, rather than the Commission settling a whole range of problems. The rapporteur agrees with the Commission view on extending wine-growing, in that planting rights should be frozen until 2010 provided a flexible approach is taken. Growth of 3 % would be allowed (the Commission proposed only 1 %), which would be allocated in priority to young wine-growers. After the 2002-2003 wine year, new planting rights would be granted for structurally sound vineyards on the basis of information provided by Member States on the wine market in the regions concerned. The rapporteur wants to include renewal of vines and improvement of wine-making techniques in the restructuring and reconversion programme. The report envisages the possibility, outside the Objective 1 regions, of 25 % financing by Member States in addition to Community funding (the Commission had excluded any possibility of a national contribution). This is to prevent relocation to regions receiving Community help. The Commission had proposed simplifying the very complex system of withdrawals from the market by a single measure: crisis distillation. The report does not oppose simplification but hopes that it will be compulsory, not optional, and that it will not be left to the Commission to decide when this should be put into effect. It should depend on neutral factors such as market prices. The report also makes provision for retaining a specific type of distillation for potable alcohol. The report proposes maintaining existing legislation for musts. Unless the Council explicitly provides for derogation, musts should not be imported in any form for wine-making (the Commission is proposing liberalisation). For quality wines produced in specified regions (qwpsr) the report reintroduces the traditional definitions of types of wine and geographic descriptions, with Member States taking responsibility for controlling and protecting the qwpsr. The rapporteur's text on producer and interbranch organisations is radically different from the Commission's and is intended to serve as a compromise between the producers and the consumers.