

Leaf tobacco: premiums and guarantee thresholds for 1999, 2000 and 2001 harvests (amend. regul. 2075/92/EEC)

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The Commission's proposals setting premiums and quotas for producers of leaf tobacco by variety group and Member State over the coming three years were broadly endorsed by the Committee. The rapporteur, Antonios TRAKATELLIS (EPP, Gr) is calling in addition for a five per-cent increase in premiums across the board to offset the erosion in producers' incomes caused by inflation since 1995 when the premiums were last altered. The committee also adopted an amendment seeking compensation for the conversion costs arising from the transition from the ecu to the euro. In principle, Mr TRAKATELLIS accepts the Commission's plans to restructure tobacco varieties and transfer quotas from the low-quality Group V to higher-quality tobacco groups in Italy and Greece but he feels that the size of the transfer proposed for Greece - 14 800 tonnes out of a total guarantee threshold of 15 700 tonnes - is excessive and impossible to implement in only three years. His solution is to transfer 25 per cent of that amount over a three-year period, bringing it into line with the transfer proposed for Italy. The Committee also opposes the plan to introduce a low-grade variety of Greek Katerini tobacco into Italy on the grounds that the soil in Italy is unsuitable and the market is in any case saturated. The Council's intention is that the legislation should enter into force by the end of March this year. However, two amendments which were tabled by Mrs IZQUIERDO ROJO (PES, P) seek to postpone it for a year, so that the new rules would apply to the 2000, 2001 and 2002 harvests instead of the 1999, 2000 and 2001 harvests, as proposed by the Commission.