

Information and promotion actions for agricultural products in third countries

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The Committee has backed a Commission proposal for measures to promote exports of farm produce outside the EU but is calling for a much bigger budget, rising from EUR 30 m in 2000 to EUR 50 m in 2003, instead of the EUR 15 m a year proposed by the Commission. The rapporteur, Giulio FANTUZZI (PES, I) points out that the sum he is asking for would still only be a fraction of the amount previously spent on export refunds before they were restricted under GATT agreements and he cites the much larger budget of over \$150 m devoted by the US each year to promoting their products on external markets. The framework programme proposed by the Commission is intended to boost the position of European Community products in the increasingly competitive world marketplace by highlighting their advantages, in terms of, for example, food safety, nutrition, labelling, animal welfare, environmentally friendly production and organic farming methods, and promoting top-quality produce such as wines, cheeses and salami. As well as increasing the overall budget, the amendments to the Commission proposal adopted by the Committee reduce the use of tendering procedures to choose the bodies to implement the measures, giving the trade organizations which will propose the promotion campaigns more say in this. The committee also wants the programmes to run for five years instead of three and asks for priority to go to proposals submitted by organizations from at least two Member States. Finally, it calls on the Commission to present a study on abolishing all export refunds and using part of the money released to fund promotional measures.