

Common organisation of the markets in processed fruit and vegetable products: additional quota to Portugal for 1999/2000 and 2000/2001

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The committee has adopted the report by Mrs María del Pilar Ayuso González (PPE-DE, E) approving the Commission's proposal on the common organisation of the markets in processed fruit and vegetable products. The committee supports the proposal made by the European Commission that the former tomato-processing quota for Portugal be reinstated to assist the Portuguese tomato-processing industry, since the quota was cut as the result of the extremely unfavourable climatic conditions which led to a drastic fall in Portuguese production. The committee considers that the provision of assistance to tomato processors is a very valuable instrument for regulating the market in fresh tomatoes and for guaranteeing a minimum price for producers. It also believes, however, that the quota system used for the allocation of aid is too rigid and inefficient. The committee also takes the view that the present aggregate of all quotas is insufficient to meet total market demand. It therefore proposes that the Regulation to which the present Commission proposal relates be amended with a view to simplifying the common organisation of the markets. Such an amendment would involve the establishment of a system of thresholds for individual Member States, including a maximum guaranteed quantity. This should enhance the competitiveness and flexibility of the industry. Nevertheless, the committee considers that the stability of this industry requires protection in the face of fierce competition on the world market.