The situation and prospects of young farmers in the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiatve report by Neil PARISH (EPP-ED, UK) calling on the EU to consider obliging the Member States to provide a minimum level of installation aid for young farmers, whose long-term future was being jeopardised by the severe economic difficulties they were facing and who accounted for 28 per cent of the farmers leaving the land. The report said that high installation costs were the chief problem experienced by young farmers across the EU and in the applicant countries, and called for installation aids and supplementary investment grants to be increased and made available for at least eight years. The committee also wanted early retirement schemes to be improved and investment aid to be directed to young farmers who revived abandoned holdings and deserted villages by developing new, regional agricultural produce. It said computer technology and the Internet must be developed for farmers as part of the "e-Europe" initiative and underlined the importance of training (especially for women farmers). Finally, looking ahead to EU enlargement, the committee called for young farmers in the applicant countries to be given priority for SAPARD pre-accession aid.