Hill farming: 25 years of community regulations implementation

2000/2222(INI) - 09/07/2001

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Michl EBNER (EPP-ED, I) calling for proposals from the Commission to safeguard the sustainable development of mountain regions. It wanted Directive 268 /75 on mountain and hill farming in certain less-favoured areas revised, saying that, although it had helped slow down the exodus from the land, it had not reversed the trend. The committee advocated a regional approach, with cross-border cooperation, using regional conventions modelled on the Alpine Convention, to find solutions to the basic problems shared by the mountain regions straddling EU frontiers. As a starting point, it called for a clear definition of mountain regions. The committee wanted compensatory payments to hill and mountain farmers to continue as a key element in the EU's policy for mountain regions. One of its chief demands was the extension of the lump-sum system of aid payments to these farmers. It advocated increased structural funding, covering the applicant countries as well, and said that the mid-term review of the CAP at the end of 2003 should include a plan for structural support covering mountain regions and taking account of enlargement. The committee insisted that the general milk quota regime should be continued for hill and mountain farmers with possible exemptions for small producers. Transport links should be developed in mountain regions but heavy flows of transit traffic, for example in the central Alps, should be shifted to more environmentally acceptable forms of transport. Measures were also needed to support agri-tourism in these areas and promote local, quality produce, extensive farming and organic production. Lastly, the report stressed the need to conserve energy and water resources.