Fruit and vegetables: common organisation of the market COM

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The Committee considers that the proposal takes only partial account of the commitments entered into under the CAP, and that it discriminates between products, between regions and between Member States. The Committee considers that financial compensation is needed in order to ensure the continuation of activities that are environmentally useful and safeguard rural employment. Account must be taken of the commitments entered into in the WTO negotiations, and in particular the gradual reduction in Community preference. However, this reduction most not allow the EU's self-sufficiency rate for fruit and vegetables to fall in general below the strategic threshold of 40%. The Committee supports the Commission proposal concerning producer organizations insofar as it sees a need to strengthen the role of such organizations in an increasingly competitive market and in the face of growing supply. To ensure that they operate smoothly, the Committee feels that it would be helpful to establish: - the legal position of producer organizations vis-à-vis other economic operators; - a mandatory accounting standards and publication of accounts; - a requirement for the accounts to be officially inspected and audited; - 100% financing for the first six years (transitional period), to be followed by co-financing from the operational fund. The Committee advocates the establishment of a special financial mechanism fully funded by the EAGGF, for making the requisite changes via the adjustment programmes during the transitional period which should last at least six years. Turning to the intervention arrangements, the Committee thinks that the limit for the amount withdrawn should be raised to 20% of the production marketed by the respective producer organizations. The transitional period should be extended to six years, and the Community withdrawal compensation for each product should be based on the weighted average of average monthly withdrawal prices during the 1995/96 marketing year. In order to prevent any adverse effects resulting from trade from third countries, the Committee calls for: - effective, clear control of the entry price; - effective, clear control of quality and information on production and conservation methods; - the same product labelling requirements as for EU products. The Committee supports the stepping-up of national and Community checks and the establishment of a special body of inspectors.