Agenda 2000: oils and fats; common organisation of the markets COM, olive oil, aid for the production (amend. regul. 136/66/EEC, 2261/84 /EEC)

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The Commission's report underlines the fact that work undertaken on the quality strategy for olive oil has resulted in the clarification of a number of factors and problems. In certain cases, these are linked to the production of olives and olive oils, the classification and the presentation of products on the market. In particular, the problems relate to the classification of olive oils, labelling rules, fraud control, the organisation of quality improvement methods as well as environmental aspects. In consequence, the market situation is dislocated by prices that are not always in line with the quality expected by the consumer. Even when allowance is made for the labelled claims, the price brackets for different kinds of olive oil are very wide and overlap considerably with each other. These variations stem from normal commercial practices but are also a consequence of inadequacy of the quality rules, and of their implementation. The measures to be undertaken require: a concerted approach over several years; a quality strategy for olive oil that involves producers, traders and industry, work by researchers and experts; the adoption of appropriate rules by the Council, the Commission and the Member States; and adaptation of international provisions at the level of the IOC and the Codex Alimentarius. This report therefore builds on the results of analyses carried out and the proposed orientations for the various levels of decision-making or action. With regard to the Council's regulation, this refers to the classification of olive oil on the one side and the organisation of producers' activities on the other side. The Commission proposes that the Council amend the designation and definition of olive oils and olive-pomace oils as well as principles of a support regime for organisations of producers involved in certain activities. The Council's decisions are a forerunner to the drawing up of more detailed rules by the Commission and the putting in place of measures or concerted actions in this sector. However, approximately two years are required before these measures actually become operational. In conclusion, all the proposed measures relate to the 2003 and 2004 budgets and do not include any additional spending. As such, they modify Council regulations already in force and as a result, a Council regulation is necessary.