

Bananas: special framework of technical and financial assistance for traditional ACP suppliers

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The Committee has approved the creation of a special system of technical and financial aid to help traditional ACP banana producers adapt to new market conditions arising from changes in the common organisation of the banana market. The committee's position was reached when it unanimously adopted a report by Peter LIESE (EPP, D) . In contrast to the Commission, which is proposing that the special system last for no longer than ten years, the Development Committee argues that at the end of this period the system should be extended or revised in the light of efforts made by the countries to adapt as well as market trends. Regarding the allocation of aid, it demands that particular account should be taken of the interests of the poorest producers. It says the aid should be granted on the basis of improvements in quality, productivity, marketing and distribution, albeit without prejudice to environmental considerations and minimum social standards and working conditions. The committee's report also argues for special support measures for organic producers and for products covered by "fair trade" criteria. It believes that the funds provided should first and foremost benefit small independent producers and that multinationals which own banana plantations in a number of countries should not be eligible for this aid. The overall amount of funding to be provided should, in committee's view, be ECU 500m. It wants the maximum amount of aid per year set for each traditional ACP supplier to take account of its competitiveness gap vis-à-vis bananas from other, competing, non-EU countries, the socio-economic importance of banana production for the country and the policy of regional integration and diversification of agricultural exports.