Bananas: special framework of assistance for traditional ACP suppliers (Regulation (EC) No 856/1999). 2002 biennial report

2003/2091(INI) - 20/05/2003

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Fernando FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍN (EPP-ED, E) on the Commission communication. The report began by noting that, since it came into force in 1993, the banana import regime had been revised several times, above all as a result of decisions taken within the WTO. It pointed out that the Cotonou Agreement provided for preferential arrangements for banana imports from ACP countries and that, under the future 'tariff only' regime, the ACP countries would continue to benefit from a tariff preference. MEPs reaffirmed the need to support these countries in the changeover to the new regime and to explore ways of strengthening the use of the Special Framework of Assistance (SFA) to support the development of the fair-trade banana market. They reiterated their belief that the customs tariff due to be introduced in 2006 - and whose amount is to be negotiated within the WTO - should promote the interests of traditional ACP banana supplier countries by protecting their access to the Community market. The report expressed concern at the reduction in the 2003 budget allocated to the SFA and asked the Commission to pay particular attention to reducing delays in payment. To help beneficiary countries to meet their obligations, MEPs also approved of the idea of "multi-year action plans" as well as the current deconcentration process to ensure that decision-making is brought closer to those concerned through local management of requests. Lastly, they called on the Commission to ensure that the increase in imports following enlargement did not lead to a potentially destabilising market surplus, and also urged it not to fund environmentally harmful projects.