

Support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

2003/0007(CNS) - 21/01/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to consolidate and support rural development and amend Regulation 1257/1999/EC and repeal Regulation 2826/2000/EC.

CONTENT : The Commission proposes to widen the scope of Community rural development support by introducing new measures. These are all accompanying measures and will be financed by the EAGGF-Guarantee Section throughout the EU territory. They are all targeted primarily at farmer beneficiaries. It will be for Member States and regions to decide if they wish to take up these measures within their rural development programmes.

The new measures will comprise: i) introduction of a new Chapter in Regulation 1257/1999/EC entitled 'Food Quality' comprising two measures: -incentive payments will be permitted for farmers who on a voluntary basis participate in Community or recognised national schemes designed to improve the quality of agricultural products and the production process used, and give assurances to consumers on these issues. Such support will be payable annually for a maximum 5-year period, and up to a maximum of EUR 1 500 per holding in a given year. - support for producer groups for activities intended to inform consumers about and promote the products produced under quality schemes supported under the above measure. Public support will be permitted up to a maximum of 70% of eligible project costs. ii) introduction of a new Chapter entitled 'Meeting Standards', comprising two measures: - Member States may offer temporary and degressive support to help their farmers to adapt to the introduction of demanding standards based on Community legislation concerning the environment, public, animal and plant health, animal welfare and occupational safety. Aid levels must be modulated to take account of the level of additional obligations and operating costs for farmers associated with the introduction of a particular standard. Aid will be payable on a flat-rate basis, and degressive for a maximum period of 5 years. It will be subject to a ceiling of maximum EUR 10 000 per holding in a given year. In no case will aid be payable where the non-application of standards is due to the non-respect by an individual farmer of standards already included in national legislation. - support for farmers to help them with the costs of using farm advisory services. Farmers may benefit up to a maximum of 80% of the cost of such services the first time they are used, subject to a ceiling of EUR 1 500. iii) introduction within the current agri-environment Chapter of Regulation 1257/1999 of support to farmers who enter into commitments for at least 5 years to improve the welfare of their farm animals and which go beyond usual good animal husbandry practice. Support will be payable annually on the basis of the additional costs and income foregone arising from such commitments, with annual payment levels of maximum EUR 500 per livestock unit. Other amendments concern a clarification of the scope of the Forestry and Training Chapters and the adding within the Chapter on the adaptation and development of rural areas (the so-called Article 33 measures) a new indent to cover the management costs associated with local partnership groups.