Food and Agriculture : plant genetic resources, ratification of the FAO International Treaty, November 2001

2003/0231(CNS) - 14/10/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to approve, on behalf of the EC, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. PRPOSED ACT : Council Decision. CONTENT : In November 1993 the FAO Conference decided to negotiate a legally binding, International Undertaking, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Commission and the Member States participated in the negotiations. They were finalized with a new 'International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture' (International Treaty), formally adopted by the FAO Conference in Rome on 3 November 2001. The Community and the Member States signed the International Treaty on 6 June 2002. The scope of the International Treaty covers 35 food crops and 29 forages. It establishes a legally binding global framework for the sustainable conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and a multilateral system combining access of all parties to the International Treaty to such resources with the sharing of commercial and other benefits of access thereto. This International Treaty will enter into force ninety days after forty parties have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. Its 'Governing Body' will then establish and make crucial decisions extremely difficult to reverse. Only countries that have deposited their instruments of ratification by that time can influence these decisions. The International Treaty is important for agricultural research and breeding in the European Union. Both Community and Member States' competences are concerned. Linked with the principle of unity in the international representation of the Community, joint action by the Community and its Member States for the deposit of the instruments of ratification or approval is required.