Fruit and vegetables: changes to and the future of the Community policy

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The Commission has submitted this communication outlining a reform to strengthen and improve this common organization of the market (COM) in order to instigate a broad debate on the future of the fruit and vegetable sector. The Commission feels that the main objective of the reform should be to help and encourage Union producers to build on their advantages (quality products, mainly intended for chiller cabinets and often highly perishable, a dynamic approach and ability to adapt to a changing market, the production-related services which they are able to offer, such as environmental protection, the healthy and diversified range of products which they offer the consumer). On balance, the present COM has proven its worth. However, its positive factors - market orientation, decentralized management, pooled supply - need to be strengthened. The Commission's objective is to re-orientate budgetary expenditure in order to give preference to positive measures which help to build the future and incorporate environmental concerns. In this sense, it proposes combining various types of measures: - better pooling of supply in order to respond to increasingly concentrated distribution; - a new system for managing short-term surpluses and gradually eliminating structural surpluses; - a more balanced ratio between fresh and processed produce; - redefinition of standardization; - a specific approach to resolve problems which arise for certain "small" products at Community level which are important at regional or local level, - stronger controls. The Commission will ensure that the Community preferences authorized in the conclusions of the Uruguay Round are safeguarded when these conclusions are implemented.