Bananas: common organisation of the market COM

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OBJECTIVE: modification of the common organization of the market in bananas (Regulation 404/93 /EEC) in order to create a sustainable equilibrium between the different interests involved, notably as regards tariff quotas for the importation of bananas, whilst maintaining the principle objectives of the regime. SUBSTANCE: Regulation 404/93/EEC on the common organization of the market in bananas provides for a share out of the tariff quota opened in each year for the importation of third-country and non-traditional ACP bananas in 3 categories (A, B and C). The implementation of the arrangements provided for in the regulation for the importation of non-traditional ACP bananas (90 000 tonnes of bananas imported duty free) creates a relative disadvantage for the latter with regard to third-country imports (both categories are governed by the same rules, including the requirement for operators to present a tariff quota import licence). As a result, the proposal provides for separate treatment of non-traditional ACP imports and imports from third countries, whilst maintaining the distinction between traditional and non-traditional ACP quantities. At the same time, in order to take account of enlargement and of the consequent modification to the supply to the three new Member States (which to date obtained their supplies exclusively from the dollar zone), the proposal raises the quota tariff provided for in the regulation whilst maintaining the same level of protection and advantages to ACP and Community suppliers of bananas. The proposed text thus provides for a readjustment of the quota shareout among operators of each category in order to maintain the equilibrium between the three categories of operators: 70.5% for category A operator and 26% for category B, leaving the 3.5% for category C unchanged. However, as far as the last category is concerned, past experience has shown that the current system (quota allocations based on past trade) limited the scope for the development of trade. The proposal therefore includes the creation of a mechanism whereby those category C operators who have traded for a minimum of 3 years, and who fulfil appropriate criteria (including having marketed a minimum volume of bananas) can transfer to category A. Finally, in order to alleviate the hardship suffered in certain cases where, due to exceptional circumstances, an operator may have been subject to genuine difficulties in marketing bananas, the proposal contains a provision to permit the extension of an operator's reference period backwards by 2 years if his reference quantity falls significantly below its habitual level.