Agricultural production compatible with environmental requirements and countryside (implem. Regul. 2078/92/EEC)

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OBJECTIVE: this Commission report deals with the application of Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 on agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside. SUBSTANCE: the first part of the report describes the operation of the agri-environmental regulation. The second part explains how it integrates with the common agricultural policy and the other instruments of Community policy. The third part reports on its implementation up to 1997. The last part draws a certain number of conclusions and presents recommendations taking into account the growing role occupied by agri-environmental programmes under Agenda 2000: a) the Commission intends to produce and present working documents on the following aspects of implementation of the programmes: - implementation in the Member States; - support for organic farming; - support for maintaining genetic resources; - evaluation studies and Community-funded research and studies; - training and demonstration projects; b) the Commission will continue to encourage Member States: - to make the best use of existing opportunities for integrating the agri-environment programme with structural fund programmes; - to develop non-premia programmes for disseminating information to farmers; - to implement fully those programmes which are behind schedule; c) the Commission is considering bringing forward several proposals for the adjustment of the provisions of Regulation 2078/92, including: - an improved legal framework for the non-land management measures; - a review of the system of maximum part-financible premia; - a review of the measure to reduce stock numbers to focus on low-intensity pasture management; - a review of criteria for incorporation of capital investments and landscape and historical farmland features within programmes; - a review of the measure for environmental set aside; - possibilities for the provision for part-financing from Community funds of monitoring and evaluation costs; - review of Community part-financing rates. In addition, in the context of Agenda 2000 the Commission will bring forward a proposal to strengthen agri-environmental measures within regional and zonal programmes. Finally, the Commission will investigate ways and means and terms of reference for establishing an observatory of environmentally beneficial agriculture.