

Agenda 2000: CEEC applicant countries, pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural development SAPARD

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OBJECTIVE: in the framework of the pre-accession strategy and Agenda 2000, to provide aid for agriculture and rural development to the applicant countries of central and eastern Europe in order to support their economic and social reform efforts and to facilitate the integration of their economies into the Community economy. **SUBSTANCE:** the aid concerns the ten applicant countries of central and eastern Europe: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Cyprus although a full applicant country is not affected by this aid. The aid covers the period 2000-2006 and takes the form of subsidies for co-financing of rural development programmes with other resources from the public and private sectors of the applicant countries. It will be reviewed by the Council not later than 31 December 2006. Concentrating on priority needs for agriculture and rural development, measures concern in particular: - support for improving the efficiency of farms (including producer groups), - processing and distribution of agricultural and fishery products, - promotion of quality products, - veterinary and phytosanitary control, - improving land quality, its reparcelling and registration, - water resource management, - vocational training, - diversification of economic activities in rural areas, - agri-environmental and forestry measures, - improvement of rural infrastructures and rural villages (including the maintenance of rural heritage as well as technical assistance). Community support will be implemented in the form of multiannual programmes, following the guidelines and principles for operational programmes under the EU structural policy. These comprise in particular the principles of complementarity, partnership, additionality, the programming procedure, monitoring and evaluation. Compatibility with the accession partnership and the national programme for the adoption of the acquis must be ensured. Community interventions will be granted only to complement corresponding national aids. They should also bring added value to national initiatives. To implement these aids the Commission will be assisted by a committee responsible for monitoring the programmes. The resources currently provided amount to euro 500 million a year at constant 1997 prices and will be allocated under the EAGGF Guarantee Section. The funds will be allocated to the applicant countries according to objective criteria such as population and agricultural area, GDP in purchasing power and specific territorial situation. Provisions have been made with regard to action against fraud and publicity for aid. On accession to the Union the beneficiary countries will lose entitlement under this regulation.