Agenda 2000: arable crops, support system for producers

1998/0108(CNS) - 18/03/1998 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: the proposed regulation forms part of the group of proposals on the reform of the common agricultural policy and translates the guidelines of Agenda 2000 in the arable crops sector. SUBSTANCE: the proposals for a regulation on arable crops and the modification of the cereals COM transpose the orientations contained in Agenda 2000 for cereals, oilseeds and protein crops. The main elements are as follows: -the intervention price for cereals will be reduced by 20% in a single step; - the provisions for maize and sorghum and export refunds (in particular for malt) will be adapted. The minimum price for starch potatoes will be reduced by 20% and compensation payments to starch potato producers will be increased in line with the increase of area payments for arable crops. Furthermore, the notion of quality type will become obsolete. The instrument of export levies would be retained, but under normal circumstances would not be required; - the regulation on arable crops increases the direct payment for cereals from ECU 54 per tonne to ECU 66 per tonne and puts direct payments for oilseeds and non-textile linseed at the same level; - protein crops will receive an additional direct payment of ECU 6.5 per tonne. Compared to the current situation this will mean a reduction in the direct payment from ECU 78.49 per tonne to ECU 72.5 per tonne. The specific scheme for durum wheat will be continued; - compulsory set-aside will be retained as an instrument, while its normal rate will be fixed at zero under certain conditions. Voluntary set-aside will still be allowed, but its effectiveness and positive impact on the environment should be further improved. It should be available for at least 10% of the arable area across the Community; - the payment per hectare and the rate of set-aside may be modified according to market developments; - the proposal for a regulation on arable crops provides for continuation of aid for silage cereals, which will result in important cost savings compared to Agenda 2000. Although the essential elements of the existing regime (in particular the base areas, the regionalisation scheme, the link to historic yields and the set-aside provisions) are retained, a major simplification is envisaged: - the application of individual base areas will no longer be possible; if base areas are exceeded, financial sanctions will still apply, while extraordinary set-aside is abolished; - under the regionalisation scheme, the possibility of determining specific base areas for maize will no longer apply. A specific yield may, however, be fixed for irrigated crops; - all provisions concerning the use of set-aside for environmental or forestry purposes will become obsolete. In the light of experience gained since 1992, other technical changes are proposed: - postponement of the sowing date from 15 May to 31 May; - postponement of the payment period from autumn to spring (from 1 January to 31 March); - reduction of the number of management committees to a single committee competent for all arable crops covered by this Regulation. Lastly, it should be noted that provisions on trade with third countries have not been altered.