EC/Switzerland agreement: trade in agricultural products, tariff and non-tariff obstacles

1999/0108(AVC) - 13/04/2000 - Legislative proposal

The Council presented a consolidated version of the agreement on trade in agricultural products between the Community and Switzerland, that also includes the final act and the signatures of all of the contracting parties. It should be recalled that this agreement seeks to considerably improve access to agricultural products on the markets of the two parties while eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade and is in accordance with the principle of reciprocity. In line with the mandate, the agricultural agreement takes account of arrangements provided for negotiations on the European Economic Area. The agreement takes account of rights and obligations of the two parties provided for in the agreement establishing the WTO and its annexes. As far as the improved access to the markets of the two parties is concerned, an important number of tariff concessions were granted on either side for plants and flowers, fresh or prepared fruits and vegetables, cheese and dairy products, meat products and certain specialist and fortified wines. More particularly, in the cheese sector, the agreement provides for the complete and reciprocal liberalisation of all cheeses at the end of a period of five years following the entry into force of the agreement. The agricultural agreement contains a section dealing with the wine production sector which, by means of the mutual recognition of the parties' respective legislations would have the effect of facilitating trade in these products. This section of the agreement also deals with intellectual property aspects since it provides for the mutual recognition and protection of geographical and traditional designations of wine products. Such mutual recongition and protection is also provided for in the case of protected designations for wine-based spirits and liqueurs. The agricultural agreement also seeks to facilitate trade between the parties by means of the mutual recognition of legislation in the following sectors: phytosanitary, animal feedstuffs, seeds and organic agriculture. Lastly, the agreement includes a section dealing with the veterinary sector which provides for the facilitation of trade in live animals and certain animal products. In the case of live animals, the parties' legislations are recognised as equivalent. For animal products, the trade between the parties will take place according to European Community rules. Furthermore, the agreement provides that Switzerland will apply the same measures to imports from third countries as those of the Community.