Rural development in the framework of Agenda 2000: interim assessment in the Union and the candidate countries

2001/2041(INI) - 30/05/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on an own-initiative report by Maria RODRIGUEZ RAMOS (PES, Spain) on rural development in the framework of Agenda 2000. (Please refer to the document dated 13/05/02.) Parliament stated that coherence must be ensured between the first and second pillars of the CAP, through complementarity between the two. Multifunctional and competitive agriculture must be preserved, which means that environmental measures and measures relating to food safety and quality must be strengthened. The Commission needs to pursue an integrated approach and to consider policy on rural areas in all its aspects in order to take due account of the principle of multifunctionality. In future, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the second pillar of the CAP. Parliament called for compulsory and gradually increasing modulation within the first pillar with the intention of reducing disparities in area payments between regions in the EU and thus creating an aid system which distorts competition less. It can also be defended in future trade negotiations as a necessary instrument to support the European model of agriculture. The money saved from the first pillar could be used for rural development all over the EU. Measures aimed at young people entering the industry and holdings wishing to invest should be given support over and above that provided for in Regulation 1259/1999, as is the case for early retirement measures, measures for disadvantaged areas and areas subject to environmental constraints, and agri-environmental and afforestation measures. The Commission needs to extend eco-conditionality measures in favour of sustainable development. Parliament went on to draw attention to the fact that making direct income support part of rural policy would place it in the WTO Green Box. Therefore, the Commission should consider such a possibility with a view to devising a support scheme which creates as little distortion to competition as possible and which helps to maintain a viable, sustainable rural environment.