Apiculture programme: measures to improve the production and marketing of honey

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The European Parliament adopted the report drafted by Astrid LULLING (EPP-ED, L) by 419 votes in favour, 37 against with 3 abstentions on actions in the field of beekeeping. Parliament notes that there continues to be an imbalance between supply and demand in the market in honey within the Community. Moreover, the level of self-sufficiency has fallen still further in the last three years, as a result of which the price of honey in the European Union depends directly on the world price, which is itself very unstable. It should be noted that the European Parliament included several amendments to the text adopted. These concern the following: - in implementing Article 26a of Directive 2001/18/EC, Member States should take legislative measures on the coexistence of genetically modified, conventional and organic crops that also allow beekeepers to manufacture honey with a pollution level below the threshold value of 0.9 %; - the Member States of the European Union have a substantial beekeeping tradition and some are large producers of honey, which should be taken into account in the implementation of this Regulation, not least in terms of the budget allocated thereto; - bearing in mind on the one hand the European Parliament's resolution of 9 October 2003 on the difficulties faced by the European beekeeping sector, which officially recognises the exceptional decline in the bee population in recent years, and on the other hand Regulation 1398/2003/EC, which prohibits the import of packets of bees, and the current shortage of biological material production units, measures need to be introduced in support of the restoration and development of the Community's bee population; - quality control checks on honey play a major part in enabling, on the one hand, improvement of the production and marketing of honey and, on the other, prevention of the marketing of honey that fails to meet the European quality criteria principally laid down in Council Directive 2001/110/EC of 20 December 2001 relating to honey. These checks make for stabilisation of the market and of prices; - each Member State must draw up a national programme for a period of 3 years, reviewable annually, hereinafter referred to as the "apiculture programme". The programme shall comprise of the following: - technical assistance to beekeepers and groupings of beekeepers; - control of varroasis and its corollaries; - rationalisation of transhumance; - measures to support the restoration and development of the Community's bee population; - cooperation with specialised bodies for the implementation of applied research programmes in the field of improving the bee population and the quality of honey and apiculture products; - measures in support of honey analysis laboratories; - any other measure apt to improve the production and marketing of honey and apiculture products. - the Community shall provide part-financing for the apiculture programmes equivalent to 75% of the expenditure borne by Member States.