Sustainable agricultural policy, agrarian reform and rural development for self-reliance in developing countries

2001/2274(INI) - 24/10/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Bashir KHANBHAI (EPP-ED, UK) on agricultural policy and development. Parliament called for the progressive elimination of trade and tariff barriers and increased access to markets for developing countries in order to allow them to benefit from common prosperity and achieve economic growth. It acknowledged that food safety standards mean strict checks are required at the EU's external borders. However, this must not hinder trade with developing countries. The EU should offer financial and technical support to help them meet those standards. Whilst the European Union has considerably improved developing countries' access to its markets, Parliament regretted the EU subsidised produce dumped on developing country markets which disrupts domestic agricultural production, as with beef in Nigeria and milk powder in Tanzania and Jamaica. In such cases, each country has a right to protect producers by means of tariff barriers. Parliament went on to regret the major increase in agriculture subsidies from the USA's Farm Bill involving subsidies amounting to USD 180 billion over ten years. Fair trade between the North and the South entails paying a fair price for the resources and agricultural products of the developing countries. This price must reflect the internal and external costs, whilst respecting minimum criteria governing the working conditions and wages of the workforce and environmental protection. Parliament pointed to the fact that, whilst certain farm sectors in some developing countries have benefited from preferential trading agreements such as the ACP-EU Sugar protocol, these countries may not benefit from added value either through processing basic commodities or from diversification of their production. The opening up of EU markets to agricultural products from developing countries should be effected gradually and in tandem with the reform of the CAP support system along multifunctional lines. Parliament further asked that the EU enhance international efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through the implementation of the action programmes envisaged under the UNCCD. A key plank of development and conflict prevention policy should be to support countries which undertake lawful agrarian reform and defend small family holdings. Finally, Parliament called for technical assistance for developing country farmers for improved conservation and distribution of the vast diversity of existing seeds, while ensuring that control remains in the hands of peasant farmers themselves.