

Agenda 2000: CEEC applicant countries, pre-accession aid for agriculture and rural development SAPARD

1998/0100(CNS) - 21/06/1999 - Final act

PURPOSE: Community support for agricultural and rural development measures in the applicant countries. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** Council Regulation 1268/1999/EC on Community support for pre-accession measures for agricultural and rural development (SAPARD) in the applicant countries of central and eastern Europe (CEECs) in the pre-accession period. **CONTENT:** In addition to providing support to sustainable agricultural and rural development in the CEECs, the Regulation seeks to solve problems affecting the long-term adjustment of the agricultural sector and rural areas, and to facilitate the implementation of the Community acquis in matters of the common agricultural policy and related policies. The following types of measure are eligible for support under the Regulation: - investment in agricultural holdings; - improving the processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products; - improving structures for quality, veterinary and plant health controls in the interests of food quality and consumer protection; - agricultural production methods designed to protect the environment and maintain the countryside; - development and diversification of economic activities; - setting up relief and management services for farmers; - setting up producer groups; - renovation and development of villages and the protection and conservation of the rural heritage; - land improvement and reparation; - establishing and updating of land registers; - improvement of vocational training; - development and improvement of rural infrastructures; - water resources management; - forestry, including afforestation, investments in forest holdings owned by private forest owners and processing and marketing of forestry products; - technical assistance for the measures covered by this Regulation, including studies to assist with the preparation and monitoring of the programme, information and publicity campaigns. SAPARD is intended to complement corresponding national actions or contribute to these. It shall be established in close collaboration between the Commission, the applicant country, the competent authorities and bodies and the economic and social partners at the appropriate level. Such cooperation shall cover preparation, implementation including financing and appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of the measures. Measures for agriculture and sustainable rural development under this Regulation will be the subject of a plan drawn up at the most appropriate geographical level. The plan is prepared by the designated competent authorities and submitted by the CEECs to the Commission after the competent authorities and organisations at the appropriate level have been consulted. The plan will cover a period of seven years. Article 4 lays down the definitions and details concerning the content of plans. Development plans must give priority to measures to improve market efficiency, quality and health standards and measures to maintain jobs and create new employment opportunities in rural areas, with due regard for provisions on the protection of the environment. Applicant countries should submit their plans within six months of the Regulation's entry into force. On the basis of these plans, the Commission has six months to approve the individual rural and agricultural development programmes. In order to assess their effectiveness, support for measures included in the programme shall be subject to prior and mid-term appraisal, on-going monitoring and ex post evaluation designed to appraise the success and impact with respect to the defined objectives. Monitoring will be carried out by reference to specific physical, environmental and financial indicators agreed and established beforehand. Applicant countries shall submit annual progress reports to the Commission. A monitoring committee will be established for each rural development programme. **Resources:** The financial contribution may take the form of advances, part-financing or financing. Within 3 months of the adoption of this Regulation, the Commission will inform each applicant country of its decision concerning the indicative 7-year financial allocation. The financial allocation is based on: - farming population; - agricultural area; - GDP in purchasing power; - specific territorial situation. Up to 2% of the annual allocation may be used to finance measures taken on the initiative of the Commission for preliminary studies, exchange visits, evaluations and controls. The Community will not normally

contribute more than 75% of total eligible public expenditure. For revenue-generating investments, public aid may cover up to 50% of the total eligible cost, of which the Community contribution may amount to a maximum of 75%. The Committee on Agricultural Structures and Rural Development will assist the Commission in the implementation of this Regulation. The Commission is required to present an annual report on the Community support granted under this Regulation to, among others, the Council and the European Parliament. Programmes drawn up under this Regulation must be given appropriate publicity in the applicant countries. On acceding to the EU, countries lose their entitlement to support under the Regulation. The resources freed up will be redistributed among the other eligible countries. ENTRY INTO FORCE: 29.06.1999. The Regulation shall apply from 1 January 2000.