Resolution on the situation with regard to soft fruits and cherries intended for processing

2006/2612(RSP) - 12/10/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, on the situation with regard to soft fruits and cherries intended for processing.

The resolution recalls that the problem of soft fruits and cherries first and foremost concerns the new Member States, particularly Poland, which accounts for two-thirds of overall EU production of soft fruits and cherries for processing. It also concerns certain regions of the old Member States where such production is a major sector of agriculture.

The Parliament calls on the Commission to take immediate steps to initiate cooperation projects and training measures for the farmers concerned and support for improvements to the marketing infrastructure in order to create better opportunities for growers of soft fruits and cherries in the EU to make a living. It calls for soft fruits, such as strawberries, currants, raspberries and gooseberries and sour and sweet cherries to be included in processing aid systems similar to those currently applied in the case of tomatoes, pears, peaches and citrus fruit.

MEPs consider that, during the transitional period, the new Member States should be given greater assistance in connection with the formation and administration of producer groups granted previous recognition. They are also in favour of compensation arrangements for producers and call for the introduction of a labelling system to indicate the country of origin of agricultural products used for processed foods.

The Commission is called upon to:

- devise and implement measures restricting excessive imports of soft fruits from third countries, particularly those which apply dumping prices;
- in the long term, consider adopting qualified market access for soft fruits, which would make imports of products from third countries conditional on compliance with environmental and social standards in their production corresponding to those of the European Union;
- take vigorous action with a view to including products which are subject to low customs tariffs (as is the case with soft fruits) on the list of sensitive goods and bringing soft fruits under special safeguard clauses (SSGs) and the entry price arrangements;
- enter discussions with the Member States with a view to introducing financial support for projects to take old soft fruit and cherry plantations out of production in the event of prolonged supply surpluses;
- simplify the relevant provisions and the crisis support arrangements for soft fruit and cherry producers suffering losses as a result of adverse weather conditions;
- introduce compensation arrangements for producers as part of the reform of the CMO in fruit and vegetables, to cover situations in which crops of soft fruits and cherries are not brought to market as a result of unforeseen and temporary difficulties stemming from supply surpluses.

The Polish Government is called upon to eliminate the fiscal disadvantages suffered by producer groups so as to encourage producers to form associations to sell their products and so that they can make optimal use of the budget of the CMO in fruit and vegetables.