Livestock production: organic production of agricultural products, indication on foodstuffs (Regul. 2092/91/EEC)

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According to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products, the

Commission must prepare a reportto Council on the implementation of several derogations for organic livestock, namely:

- tethering of cattle in buildings from before 24 August 2000;
- different livestock housing requirements in buildings from before 24 August 1999, namely on access of waterfowls to swimming water, on poultry housing conditions, flock sizes and access to outdoor area of poultry as well as on access to open-air runs and pasture for mammals and on the size of indoor and outdoor space of housing.

These derogations are to run out on 31 December 2010. There is no legal requirement for a revision before that date.

In order to obtain data for the preparation of this report, all Member States and several European non-Member Stateswere asked to complete two questionnaires. 20 Member States as well as Bulgaria, Norway and Switzerland responded to one or both of the questionnaires.

Tethering of cattle: quite a number of Member States find the phasing out of the derogation allowing the tethering of cattle by 31 December 2010, problematic and demand a prolongation of at least five years. Mainly climatic (regions with long winter housing), geographical, structural and economic arguments have been put forward. The detrimental effects noticed in tethering systems include:claw and leg health problems (lack of exercise);problems with calving; cattle become too wild after release from tethering. The positive effects of tethering systems include: no dehorning;less stress for lower ranking animals (no competition for feed, resting place etc.);more intensive observation, allowing for preventive action; and less claw problems.

Arguments used for prolongation requests include:

a) geographic constraints:

- mountain areas;

- lack of straw in mountains;

b) structural constraints:

- lack of additional land and/or placed inside villages;

- landscape preservation;

- more time for new Member States to ensure development.

c) economic constraints:

- redemption period for the investment in the stable;

- rural development programs 2007–2013 (5 year commitment needed, farmers might discontinue organic farming without derogations);

- poorly developed markets lead to reduced possibilities to valorise organic meat and thus invest in stables;

- small farms not profitable to rebuild/invest.

France wants unlimited prolongation for tethering for a maximum of 6 months per year also in new buildings, under certain conditions regarding access to exercise area. Portugal opposes any further derogation.

Other derogations: despite their currently widespread use, few Member States require prolongations of the derogations on access of waterfowls to swimming water, on poultry housing conditions, flock sizes and access to outdoor area of poultry. Various Member States demand a prolongation of the derogations on access to open-air runs and pasture for mammals as well as on the size of indoor and outdoor space. It was argued that more time was needed for new Member States as it is the farms with old stables converting. In addition, for rural development programs 2007–2013, a 5 year commitment was needed, and farmers might discontinue organic farming without derogations.