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INFORMATION MEMO

CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL FORESTRY POLICIES

The Commission has just laid before the Council a report in four parts, drafted in association with the forestry departments of the six Member States, on the co-ordination of forestry policy in the Community.

Woodlands in the EEC

A short account is given of the situation in the Community. About 25 400 000 hectares - or 21.6% of the area of the Six - are wooded. Density, composition and method of treatment vary widely from one area to another; the production of timber, totalling nearly 88 million cubic metres in 1960, including 51.5 million cubic metres of constructional and industrial timber, falls far short of requirements. In 1961 the deficit, which has grown from year to year, was the equivalent of 29 million cubic metres of round wood for imported wood in the rough and sawn timber alone, and more than 47 million cubic metres if the round wood equivalent of imported manufactured products, pulp and paper is taken into consideration. At the end of the report statistical tables give a few essential figures on woodlands, their composition and their output.

Mention is also made of the functions of woodlands other than that of producing timber: they provide protection against erosion by wind and rain, they play a part in rural economic life in conjunction with farming, and lastly they have a social and psychological value as health-giving places of relaxation and recreation for townsfolk.

The bases of a Community forestry policy

At the Brussels Forestry Conference of 9-11 June 1959, the Member States made a general survey of forestry problems and submitted to the Commission resolutions and recommendations on measures of forestry policy.

The Legal Service of the European Executives has also been called on to give a ruling on the possibility of establishing a common policy on forestry affairs. Although there can be no question of planning a common policy for timber, which is not listed in Annex II of the Treaty, such a policy could be contemplated as part of policy on

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structures, because this would mean improving the conditions governing land profitability, the main factor in agricultural production.

Lastly, the Community's Action Programme for the Second Stage must be applied in all fields of the economy, and hence in matters of forestry.

Forestry problems

1. Firstly, there are technical problems arising directly or indirectly from the application of the Treaty of Rome:

- (a) The harmonization of regulations on forest seeds and seedlings so as to remove obstacles to trade motivated by considerations of genetic or external quality. Stringent common regulations should have a beneficial effect on the quality and productivity of reforestation in the EEC;
- (b) The harmonization of plant health regulations with the object of promoting trade whilst at the same time strengthening protection against harmful agents;
- (c) The uniform classification of wood in the rough so as to improve commercial practices;
- (d) The harmonization of conditions of sale and of marketing of wood in the rough. This is necessary for the establishment of a genuine common market;
- (e) The introduction and speeding up of programmes on freedom of establishment and freedom to supply services in forestry;
- (f) The major question of state aids to forestry, without which afforestation would often not be carried out;
- (g) Problems of co-ordination of occupational training, of dissemination of information and above all of forestry research: in the field of research well-planned co-ordination will obviate overlapping and render the work of research institutes more effective;
- (h) Detailed and accurate Community forestry statistics must be compiled, since they are essential to the success of forestry measures planned for the future: this will require changes in certain elements of national forestry statistics.

2. Next, problems of timber production policy must be studied. Forestry output is well below requirements; all studies on the outlook for the development of timber production and consumption show that the gap will continue to widen for many years. Aware of this problem, the Community countries are already taking energetic measures to improve production. It is vital to co-ordinate these efforts in each of our countries: in the short term, a genuine common timber market must develop production and trade and improve

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distribution of the raw material within the Community; in the longer term, national policies for afforestation and extension of woodlands should be co-ordinated or even merged into a comprehensive Community afforestation plan.

It should be noted that the main difficulties to be overcome will be connected with financing, which must be on a large scale and steadily maintained from year to year.

3. Lastly, a number of problems connected with structure policy: they were mentioned briefly in "Proposals for the working out and putting into effect of the common agricultural policy" of June 1960. These include:

- (a) Protective afforestation considered from the angle of regional development or carried out for the immediate benefit of farming;
- (b) Forestry associated with agriculture in mixed farming;
- (c) Problems connected with small privately-owned woodlands: consolidation of holdings, association of owners to form viable managements units, avoidance of sub-division, afforestation of marginal and waste land;
- (d) Problems relating to the profitability of forestry;
- (e) Taxation applied to forestry;
- (f) All the problems connected with woodlands as beauty spots and places for tourism and recreation beneficial to public health. This aspect of woodlands, which is too often neglected, is becoming a major concern for densely-populated industrial areas. Nature reserves and national parks come under this head.

Conclusion and programme of work

In the final pages of the report these problems are summarized and classified; of the tasks listed some are already under study and for some a solution is in sight.

It is impossible to establish a detailed and definitive timetable for the work to be undertaken; some problems must be tackled forthwith; others must be left to ripen and will not be solved until the feeling of Community solidarity has become stronger.

However, to carry out this work and achieve a really effective co-ordination of national forestry policies, the Commission must maintain and strengthen co-operation with national forestry departments and between these departments.