

# GREEN EUROPE

NEWSLETTER ON THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY



## ENVIRONMENT AND THE CAP



# **ENVIRONMENT AND THE CAP**

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## ENVIRONMENT AND THE CAP

The purpose of this issue is to outline briefly the problems arising at the interface between agriculture and the environment, to review action being taken at Community level and to explore the outlook.

### PART ONE : INTERACTION BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

#### I. The contribution of agriculture to the quality of the environment

Agriculture has provided sufficient food for a growing population, thanks to productivity improvements. While improving the fertility of the environment, agriculture has contributed to a wide diversity of landscapes and ecosystems in Europe. Although farming techniques have changed a great deal since the war, the land is still a reflection of nature, and, as such, an area of recreation badly needed in a modern, essentially urban and industrial society.

If farming were to stop, the environment would surely suffer. Whenever the fields are no longer ploughed, whenever meadows or pastures are no longer cut or grazed, whenever terraces and small drainage and irrigation networks are neglected, scrub tends to develop sporadically, ecologically weak, encroaching on the diversity of the wildlife in the fields, facilitating the spread of fire and as a result erosion and desertification. In mountain areas, cessation of farming can lead to avalanches, mud slides and rapid erosion. Water levels can also suffer when farms cease to operate.

In the areas in which nature is hostile and which are also unattractive to industry, the departure of farmers means that infrastructure is bound to suffer and that it is all the harder for non-farmers to stay on. Soon, the countryside becomes less accessible to town dwellers and tourism declines.

While it is true that the pursuit of agriculture is necessary for the protection of the countryside, some farming techniques do represent a threat.

But the curtailment of certain farming practices could reduce farmer's incomes and blunt the competitive edge of European agriculture, and such official measures can therefore only be contemplated if appropriate compensation is provided.

Agriculture also has to contend with the pressures exerted by other economic activities on the environment : urbanization, industry and transport: their impact must be cushioned.

## II. Agriculture as a threat to the environment

The threat to the environment can be broken down under six headings :

### 1. Agriculture and the quality of the water

- (a) Over-use of nitrogen fertilizers and organic waste may force up the nitrate content of ground water to be used for drinking. This is a threat to health, especially of babies.
- (b) The same point must be made for pesticides.
- (c) The build-up of nitrates and phosphates in surface waters can restrict the diversity of wildlife because it facilitates the proliferation of certain species - "eutrophication".
- (d) Food processors release organic waste which, if it gets into surface waters, can damage water organisms. The same applies for liquids released from the storage of agricultural products (silage), farm waste (dung) and other food processors' waste.

### 2. Agriculture and the quality of the soil

- (a) Certain farming systems leave the soil uncovered for long periods, which may lead to severe erosion, even in flat or near-flat land in the north of Europe.
- (b) Overgrazing can also cause erosion; it can be very harmful in the Mediterranean areas.
- (c) The increasingly common use of heavy equipment tends to compact the land.
- (d) The long-term use of certain fertilizers, pig slurry, urban waste (compost, mud) and pesticides can lead, with time, to a build-up of toxic (cadmium, lead, mercury) and phytotoxic (copper, zinc) heavy metals and chemical residues.
- (e) Over-use of chemicals can interfere with the biological qualities of the soil, in particular its microbiology.

### 3. Agriculture and the quality of the air: smoke, smells and noise

The main problems are connected with waste from intensive stock farming and the processing industries, during storage, treatment and spreading, and by the noise of agricultural machinery.

#### 4. Agriculture and the quality of food

- (a) The most disturbing problem is that of pesticide residues and of veterinary products detected in food sold to the consumer, to which must be added the residues of food preservatives.
- (b) Over-use of nitrogen fertilizers can also increase dangerously the nitrate content of vegetables.

#### 5. Agriculture and the diversity of wildlife and the countryside

- (a) In certain regions, drainage of wetlands may deprive many species, especially birds, of their natural habitat, without always improving the farms.
- (b) The use of fertilizers and conditioners on certain grasslands of low fodder value but having rare plants which are endangered species can pose a threat.
- (c) Land consolidation, especially the removal of hedges and stone walls and levelling work, can harm plant life, animal life and the countryside.
- (d) In general, any change in the intensity of farming can mean overfarming or underfarming, harmful to wildlife and the countryside.
- (e) Farm buildings and roads and tracks can spoil the appearance of the landscape.
- (f) Disorderly reforestation may also blotch the landscape (especially on mountain slopes) or produce a monotonous effect.

#### 6. Agriculture and disasters affecting the environment

Under-use or abandonment of farmland can be the cause of fires, landslides, avalanches, erosion and desertification.

### III. The danger of damage to farmland connected with management of the environment

The control of the various forms of urban and industrial pollution and the use of land for industrial, urban and interurban operations (regional development) have a direct impact on the quality of farmland.

#### 1. Pollution of the air and the quality of farmland

The pollution of farmland and crops by atmospheric fallout from urban and industrial activities raises two types of problem.



(a) Regular urban and industrial pollution

- Farming areas near industrial or urban centres suffer the immediate effects of dry or wet fallout, especially acid compounds ("acid rain") but also of heavy metals, lead, cadmium, mercury and metalloids (Fluor). Such pollution affects the soil, reduces yields, threatens the health of livestock and can contaminate crop and livestock products;
- Farming areas distant from urban and industrial centres can also suffer from fallout of these substances. However, the effects in this case are generally long-term ones, as it takes time for the substances to build up.  
In the early stages, the effects are not obvious, and this gives an impression, which is all the more dangerous, of false security.

(b) Major technological accidents, e.g. :

- The explosion at the chemicals plant at Seveso in 1982 released into the atmosphere quantities of dioxin, which poisoned the soil over a radius of several kilometres;
- The explosion of the nuclear energy plant at Chernobyl (USSR) in 1986 left a radioactive cloud (iodium, caesium, strontium) which within a few days spread over much of Europe, contaminating certain crops and types of livestock, and even the land.

2. Pollution of water and the quality of farmland

- (a) The quality of the water used for irrigation is an essential aspect of the maintenance of soil yields and the production of sound food. Accordingly, the level of pollution of surface waters and ground waters by urban or industrial liquid waste must be regularly monitored for any abnormal occurrences of residues of chemical synthesis, heavy metals, salts, pathogenic organisms, radioactive substances, e.g. irrigation of farmland using water from urban or industrial sewage farms can raise similar problems.
- (b) The re-use by farmers of sewage sludge may be contemplated only if it has real value as fertilizer and if its content as regards undesirable substances is compatible with the maintenance of the quality of the land and of the food grown on it. Permanent verification is essential.

3. Pollution by waste and the quality of farmland

- (a) Re-use by farmers of industrial or urban waste  
Industrial and urban activities produce organic or mineral wastes which may contain fertilizers. However, the same reservation as that made at point II.2.b must also be made in this case.

- (b) Compulsory burning of waste, where proper rules as regards the filtering of smoke are not imposed, may entail pollution of the atmosphere and contamination of agricultural production (see point II.1).

#### 4. Allocation of land and the quality of farmland

In all the Member States, schemes are now in operation designed to ensure organized location of urban and industrial activities, communication networks and land allocated to farming, forestry, recreation and nature protection. Depending on the countries and the geographical level, the schemes include:

- land occupation plans,
- regional development and town planning guide schemes,
- land improvement,
- regional planning,
- regional development.

These schemes, which should achieve rational use of the land in terms of real economic needs and land potential, tend to neglect the needs of agriculture. Thus, since the war, the "market garden belts" of many cities have disappeared under concrete, regardless of the quality of the farmland improved over many years by generations of farmers. The best farmland is sometimes used for factories, new towns, motorways, or airports, forcing the farmers onto poorer land. Better management of the environment and of natural resources could avoid many of these cases.

### PART TWO : ACTION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

#### I. The legal bases of the protection of the environment

The protection of the environment was discerned as an important need in the industrialized countries only towards the end of the '60s. It is therefore not surprising that ecology is not mentioned in the Treaty of Rome, adopted ten years previously.

##### 1. The policy on environment in the Community

Before the approval of the Single European Act, in February 1986, the only legal bases for Community action on the environment were Articles 100 and 235 of the Treaty, the former concerning the harmonization of national legislation having an impact on the operation of the common market and the second referring to action not specifically provided for in the Treaty. As regards principles, Article 2 of the Treaty states that the Community has as its tasks ... to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities.

Referring to this principle, the Heads of State or Government, meeting in Paris for their first "summit" meeting in 1972, called upon the Commission to prepare an action programme for July 1973. The adoption of this programme by the Council on 20 July 1973 may be regarded as the birth certificate of the policy for the environment in the Community. The first programme proposed for adoption a set of measures, including:

- the reduction of pollution and nuisances,
- safeguarding of the natural environment, in association with the common agricultural policy,
- improvement in working and living conditions.

The programme was renewed, with additions, for the periods 1977 to 1981 and 1982 to 1986.

The Single European Act, now being ratified by the twelve parliaments, includes specific legal bases for the inclusion of environment problems in the area of Community responsibility, by adding to the EEC Treaty a Title VII entitled "The environment". This new title states that:

- "I. Action by the Community relating to the environment shall have the following objectives :
  - (i) to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment;
  - (ii) to contribute towards protecting human health;
  - (iii) to ensure a prudent and rational utilization of natural resources",
- "II. ... environmental protection requirements shall be a component of the Community's other policies",
- "IV. The Community shall take action relating to the environment to the extent to which the objectives referred to in paragraph 1 (see the extract mentioned above at the first indent) can be attained better at Community level than at the level of the individual Member States".

## 2. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Article 39 of the EEC Treaty sets the objective of increasing the productivity of agriculture, in particular through the rational development of agricultural production, and of ensuring an equitable standard of living for the farming community. In this context, allowance must be made for the impact of farming on ecology and the countryside and solutions must be sought which, while meeting the needs of agricultural production, ensure the protection of the environment. Remuneration of the services provided by agriculture to the society as a whole in this field can also be contemplated, in particular to offset the income losses suffered by farmers operating within special constraints.

Article 43 authorizes the Council to adopt measures in pursuit of the objectives of Article 39, and relevant expenditure is therefore reimbursable by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

Article 43 is thus the legal basis for action on the protection of the environment on farms where such protection is accompanying action under a "common measure" the main purpose of which has a direct link with improvement of structures, rationalization of farming practices, or the ensuring of a fair standard of living for the agricultural population.

## II. How the Common Agricultural Policy caters for the environment

### 1. Organization of the markets and policy on prices

The market support instruments operate independently of schemes to protect the environment. Any effect they may have in this field is therefore indirect. In this connection, it could be argued that the introduction of intervention systems offering unlimited outlets at good prices regardless of market conditions has been an incentive to farmers to step up production by increasing unit yields, which may have entailed excessive use of fertilizers and plant health protection products. It could, however, also be argued that a policy guaranteeing relatively high prices has protected a large number of family farms, which has prevented excessive "extensification" of agriculture with all the disadvantages this could have had in terms of damage to the environment and the countryside. The recent changes, designed to reduce the role of intervention as an outlet in its own right and thus to discourage over-production, to concentrate income support on the structurally weaker farms and to ensure better equilibrium between supply and demand should also help to encourage the development of agriculture along lines compatible with the constraints imposed by the need to protect the environment.

### 2. Regulations on plant health, animal health and veterinary products

The following are only a few examples of the efforts which have been made in this field at Community level :

- (a) Directive 70/524/EEC establishes rules for the use of additives in animal feedingstuffs. Within this framework, Directive 85/520/EEC has established maximum copper content of pig feed so as to cut down the build-up of this metal from slurry spread on the soil.
- (b) Directive 79/112/EEC lays down rules for labelling of food to be delivered unprocessed to final consumers and deals with certain aspects of their presentation and advertising. Under Article 2(2) of this Directive, the Commission laid before the Council on 30 April 1981 a proposal for a Directive to

allow claims as to biological or organic character "provided that they refer to cultivation processes which do not involve recourse to synthetic products and which avoid environmental pollution, and provided that it is warranted that the foodstuff has the essential characteristics of products obtained by such processes".

This proposal is still pending.

- (c) Directive 78/631/EEC lays down rules as to the labelling of plant health protection products to prevent over-use and Directive 79/117/EEC prohibits the sale and use of plant health protection products containing mercury or persistent organo-chloride compounds (aldrin, dieldrin, DDT, etc..).

### 3. Socio-structural policy

#### 3.1. General, specific and regional "common measures"

- (a) The purpose of the three 1972 socio-structural directives was the modernization of agriculture, with the emphasis on the family farm, with restriction of aids for para-industrial units. Directive 72/159/EEC did not include action to support intensification of egg and poultry production. As for pig-farming, the Directive was restricted to the grant of aids to farms in a position to produce at least 35% of the pig feed consumed, allowing for the spread of slurry in reasonable quantities over the farm, and avoiding pollution of the water. A maximum of pig places was also fixed, to avoid encouraging large, industrial-type, units.

These three directives have since been superseded, but some of their provisions, in similar form, have been included in Regulation (EEC) N° 797/85.

- (b) Directive 75/268/EEC defined the less-favoured agricultural areas, comprising (Article 3) :

- mountain and hill areas, in which farming is necessary to protect the countryside, in particular against erosion (paragraph 3);
- less fertile areas threatened with depopulation (paragraph 4);
- areas which have specific disadvantages to contend with, in which farming must be maintained to ensure the protection of the countryside (paragraph 5) and the preservation of the environment (paragraph 5 amended by Regulation (EEC) N° 797/85).

In these less favoured areas, an annual allowance can be paid to farmers to offset their higher production costs due to hostile natural conditions.

Ten years later, it is fair to claim that Directive 75/268 has worked well and that the maintenance of agriculture has enabled the environment to be protected in the less-favoured areas.

These areas represent 52 % of the UAA (Utilized Agricultural Area) of the Community and cover most of the Mediterranean regions, plus Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

However, in certain less-favoured areas, farming has become over-intensified and is a threat to the fragile balance of the natural milieu.

- (c) Since 1977, The Community has developed specific and regional measures to overcome the problems besetting farmers in the poorest regions. Intervention of this kind facilitates improvement and preservation of the land through forestry, waterworks and, where appropriate, action against erosion (banking, ditching, control of water courses). For some years an environment protection clause has been included in these special and regional schemes : it requires the Member States to ensure that all aspects of the environment are borne in mind. Also the principle of a study of impact on the environment has been approved for major engineering work, especially draining and irrigation.

Specific and regional measures now concern the West of Ireland, Scotland, the North of the Massif Central in France, Northern Italy, Greece and Portugal.

Also, as regards regional measures, the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs) must be mentioned, the agricultural aspect of which may be very important, and which also include an environment protection clause.

- (d) As regards the processing and marketing of agricultural products, Regulation (EEC) N°355/77 provides for Community aids to projects which help to rationalize the processing of agricultural products and to recover by-products and waste (Article 11). This facilitates investment in the protection of the environment in processing units to avoid, in particular, pollution of soil, water and the atmosphere.
- (e) The new policy on agricultural structures defined in Regulation (EEC) N° 797/85 on improving the efficiency of agricultural structures involves a set of measures to safeguard the environment :

- Community aids to investments for the protection and improvement of the environment, within material improvement plans for individual farms (Article 3 (1));
- restriction of Community aids to pig production to farms which can produce at least 35% of the pig feed they use, allowing the spreading of reasonable quantities of slurry over the farm (Article 3(4), last sub-paragraph); the number of pig places is also limited;
- as regards eggs and poultry, Community aids are prohibited (Article 3(5)) and national aids are confined to investments in the protection and the improvement of the environment (Article 8 (4), first indent);
- grant of a compensatory allowance against natural handicaps (Article 13) under Directive 75/268/EEC (see above), maintenance of the compensatory allowance in areas that are afforested (Article 13) and aids to the improvement of woodlands (Article 20);
- national aids with a view to contributing to the introduction or the maintenance of agricultural production practices compatible with the need to conserve the natural habitat and ensure an adequate income for farmers in areas which are environmentally sensitive (Article 19).

This Regulation reflects a new approach to the environment as an aspect of the Common Agricultural Policy. Previous legislation was mainly concerned with maintaining agriculture in order to conserve the natural habitat, especially the soil, in areas where nature is hostile, entailing high production costs. It did not mention farming practices compatible with the need to protect areas having an acknowledged value from the point of view of ecology and the countryside. Article 19 of Regulation (EEC) N° 797/85 mentions the criteria of ecology, landscape and compatible practices.

For example, under Article 19, the Commission has authorized the payment of an allowance :

- to Danish farmers who are not allowed to drain land because of the danger of polluting water by iron salts (ochre);
- to German farmers in Schleswig-Holstein who undertake not to use their meadows in the Spring, in order to give birds time to raise their young;
- to German farmers in Hessen who have undertaken to maintain extensive farming of grassland (less than 2

livestock units (LU) and less than 60 kg of nitrogen per hectare per year, no plant health protection products).

This Article 19 was presented, at the time of its approval, as being an intermediary stage. Thus, on 21 April 1986, the Commission laid before the Council a proposal for a Regulation to improve the status of environmental protection in the policy on structures (see Part Three of this paper).

### 3.2. Agricultural research

The Community agricultural research programmes have included the protection of the environment from the following angles :

- (a) The "biological control" programme (1978-1983) was designed to prevent the use of chemicals and concentrated on ways and means of control that were less harmful to the environment and used less energy. The main points of effort were apple, citrus fruit and olive orchards, cabbage crops and cereal crops;
- (b) The various aspects of the deterioration of the quality of soil because of single-crop farming and the use of heavy farm equipment have been studied and work now being carried out is designed to assess and improve management of soil and land resources ("land use" programme);
- (d) The present programme on "energy saving in agriculture" concerns the optimization of the use of fertilizers, studies of the biological fixation of nitrogen, of organic fertilizers and of photo-synthesis, and the pursuit of work on the integrated protection of plants.

### 3.3. Forestry

The consultative document on the Community's action with regard to forestry released at the end of 1985 ("Forestry Memorandum") stresses the vital importance of forestry as a protector of the environment, and recommends a number of measures :

- (a) aid to the creation and maintenance of shelter belts, which have a particularly useful role to play in efforts to combat water and wind erosion, the prevention of avalanches and flooding, and the fixing of dunes;
- (b) establishment of a code of good ecological conduct for productive woodlands to maintain the fertility of the soil and the diversity of types produced over the long term and to accommodate animal wildlife and give proper place to the landscape;
- (c) incentives to the establishment of reserves and natural parks;



- (d) strengthening of recent agro-forestry action for the afforestation of farmland which has been abandoned, is marginal and under-used;
- (e) aids to the creation and development of regional "forestry-environment" associations to promote a dialogue between foresters and ecologists.

### III. Agriculture as an aspect of the Community's policy for the environment

#### 1. Action Programme of the European Communities for the Environment (1982-1986)

As regards agriculture, this programme states that the aims should be :

- to protect and conserve more effectively those areas which fulfil important ecological or agronomic functions (natural or semi-natural ecosystems, countryside, grade 1 agricultural land, ground water protection areas),
- to enhance the positive effects and temper the negative effects of agriculture on the environment,
- to examine the impact on the environment of subsidies to farmers,
- to consider whether the Directive on the less-favoured areas can also contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

#### 2. Community action for the environment

Pursuant to Regulation (EEC) N° 1872/84, the Community has power to grant financial support :

- (a) to develop specific new technology;
- (b) to develop methods of monitoring the quality of the natural environment;
- (c) to contribute to the maintenance or restoration of threatened biotopes, sheltering endangered species.

With regard to the application of specific new technology in farming, Community financial aids have been granted :

- to the cryogenic treatment of effluents from olive oil production units,
- to reduction of polluting emissions during drying of milk,

- to the treatment of straw for the production of paper pulp.

In connection with the establishment of methods of monitoring the environment, an aid has been granted for the immunological analysis of dioxins and dibenzofurans in air, water and soil.

The application of this regulation to the protection of biotopes has consisted mainly in subsidies for the purchase of land, for protection equipment or for the preparation of management plans which could impose special constraints on farming and forestry. Such constraints could normally entail the application of Article 19 of Regulation (EEC) N° 797/85 (mentioned at point II.31.e, which provides for compensation).

Also, the application of this regulation raises the problem of the effect of the aid to land purchase on the development of agricultural structures.

### 3. Studies of impact on the environment

Under Directive 85/337/EEC, concerning the assessment of the impact of certain public and private projects on the environment, certain agricultural products must be assessed, where the Member State concerned takes the view that their features require this (Article 4). Such projects are the following :

- (a) Land consolidation projects;
- (b) Projects for the use of uncultivated land or "semi-natural" areas for intensive farming;
- (c) Agricultural water projects;
- (d) First afforestation, where it is liable to lead to harmful change, and clearance work needed to allow for conversion to another type of land use;
- (e) Farms which can accommodate poultry;
- (f) Farms which can accommodate pigs;
- (g) Farming of salmon and the like;
- (h) Recovery of land from the sea.

The Member States must take all action needed to ensure that projects liable to have an appreciable impact upon the environment, in particular because of their nature, scale or location, are properly assessed to determine their effects.

### 4. Information on the state of the environment

Decision 85/338/EEC established the Commission's working programme concerning an experimental project for the collection, coordina-

tion and mutual consistency of information on the state of the environment and of natural resources in the Community. This project tackles the following questions directly involving agriculture:

- identification of biotopes of major importance for the conservation of nature in the Community;
- assessment of the impact of acid rain on soil;
- protection of the environment in the Mediterranean area, in particular quality of soil and soil erosion.

#### 5. Use of sewage sludge in agriculture

The processing of waste in sewage plants yields treated water plus a residual sediment known as "sewage sludge". The presence of organic matter and fertilizers in sludge means that it can be used in agriculture. However, it also contains heavy metals which can poison plants and man if they get into the crops. The use of sludge is now controlled by Directive 86/278/EEC on the protection of the environment, and in particular of the soil, when sewage sludge is used in agriculture. This Directive sets maximum heavy metal concentrations, to prevent the build-up of metal in soil.

In fact, the principles underlying this Directive could be applied for the agricultural use of other waste, and even further, to define reference criteria for determining the quality of farmland.

### IV. The agriculture/environment interface in Community research and development programmes

#### 1. Action programme for research (APR) into the environment

The environment APR covers the following proposals on research and development programmes :

- Protection of the environment,
- Climatology,
- Major technological risks.

Examination of the scientific content of these programmes shows that agriculture is affected mainly by the first, through the following :

##### (a) Quality of the air :

Effects of atmospheric pollution on agricultural productivity;

(b) Quality of the soil :

- behaviour of pollutants in soil and transfer to plants;
- effects of agricultural and forestry practices on the quality of soil, in particular excess of fertilizers and erosion problems (in connection with the climatology programme);

(c) Processing and utilization of organic sludge and liquid agricultural waste (COST 681 concerted action) :

- production of biogas;
- methods of analysis of undesirable components;
- health protection aspects;
- long-term build-up of heavy metals and access by pollutants to plants and water;
- fertilizer value of sludge.

2. Research programme into the recycling of urban and industrial waste

One of the themes of this programme is the processing of organic waste by fermentation, hydrolysis or composting. This topic is concerned, in particular, with the processing of waste from food processing plants and the use in agriculture of the composts of organic waste, in particular, urban waste.

3. Research programme into biotechnology and pilot projects

The Commission's policy paper COM(86)221 on the development of biotechnology in Europe stresses that the application of biotechnology to agriculture can be both harmful and beneficial to the environment.

The dangers include an increasing tendency for farmers to grow only one crop, for industrial needs, to the detriment of ecological diversity and the landscape, and another danger is that of the creation of varieties resisting pesticides, which could engender over-use of pesticides. On the other hand, biotechnology could help to solve the environment problems arising in agriculture, through :

- the breeding of disease-resistant species, thus curbing the use of pesticides;
- the microbiological fixing of nitrogen from the air in the soil;
- improvements in the efficiency of fertilizers;
- the development of bio-degradable pesticides;
- better use of waste and by-products.

**PART THREE : OUTLOOK FOR ACTION AS REGARDS THE ENVIRONMENT**  
**UNDER THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

**I. The new context : the Green Paper and the Commission's guidelines**

In 1986, the Commission submitted a proposal which should enable the socio-structural regulations adopted under the CAP to give more room to environmental considerations.

**1. The priority objectives set by the Commission for the CAP**

As soon as it started work in 1985, the new Commission decided to organize consultations on the outlook for European agriculture. In July 1985, it submitted a document on this subject ("Green Paper" COM(85)333 final, 30 July 1985) to the Community institutions and to the other Community bodies concerned. This document presented a number of fundamental options for the future development of the agricultural policy. In December 1985, the Commission announced tentative guidelines ("A future for European agriculture" - COM (85)750 final, 18 December 1985), based both on the views expressed during the consultations and on the further study made after the consultative document was released. Within this framework, the Commission fixed the following priorities :

- reduction of output of surplus products;
- better matching of market requirements (diversification, quality);
- fuller support for small family holdings;
- maintenance of agriculture to safeguard the socio-economic and natural environment;
- promoting increased awareness among farmers of environmental problems;
- development of food processing industries.

**2. Schemes and instruments and their implications for the environment**

**(a) Policy on pricing:**

The Commission takes the view that a restrictive policy for pricing is indispensable, to be supplemented by action to accommodate the problem of small farms and that of areas where there is a heavy concentration of structurally weak holdings. The policy on prices proposed is therefore favourable to the protection of the environment, for the reasons set out in Part Two of this document (point II.1).

**(b) Regulations on plant protection products:**

As regards these products, the following measures will be taken to counter the risk to the environment :

- standards will be established or tightened up;
- use will be subject to approval;
- their distribution will be restricted to persons who can show that they are qualified and organized to give advice concerning their storage, handling and use;
- there will be warnings against the wrong kind of use.

(c) Investment aids:

The Commission is planning to introduce appropriate environment impact assessment procedures for major land use projects, and to consider how far the use of public aids to drainage should be restricted or even, in certain cases, prohibited.

The question of common action as regards intensive stock-farming also arises, because of the difficulties caused by slurry, which is causing severe pollution of water in certain areas;

(d) Compensatory allowances in the less-favoured areas :

It has been felt desirable to strengthen the arrangements supporting farming in mountain and hill areas and certain less-favoured areas, without this entailing an increase or intensification of production, the aim being to contribute to the maintenance of agricultural activity needed to safeguard social and natural equilibria;

(e) Encouragement of practices compatible with the environment:

The aim is to ensure income support for farmers retaining or introducing farming practices compatible with the need to protect the natural milieu. Aids could offset income losses and costs resulting from, for example:

- the temporary and partial suspension of farming to ensure survival of wildlife;
- reduction in the fertilization and treatment of crops;
- reduction in livestock density;
- decisions not to drain or irrigate;
- retention of hedges and stone walls.

Such schemes could cover protected natural areas, areas of protection of groundwater and buffer strips near natural assets to be protected.

Community financial participation in such income aid schemes could be contemplated.

- (f) Cessation of farming, with a view to protecting the environment:

It is proposed that compensation be paid to farmers prepared to "set aside" farmland, e.g. for afforestation or the creation of ecological reserves;

- (g) Vocational training and research:

The agricultural extension services should provide, even more than in the past, the right kind of advice to farmers on the use of plant protection products, veterinary products and fertilizers of natural or industrial origin.

Research work should be encouraged to develop products and methods of use more compatible with the need to protect the environment;

- (h) "Biological" farming:

It is also important to accommodate the requirements of certain consumers - a growing minority - who prefer agricultural products of "biological" origin, i.e. produced without the use of chemicals and complying with biological cycles and natural equilibria.

The Commission will be taking steps to promote "biological" production under legislation ensuring freedom of movement and providing proper assurances, in particular by laying down rules as to labelling.

## II. The Commission's supplementary proposals on socio-structural policy, for the adaptation of agriculture to the new situation on the markets and the preservation of the countryside

Environmental considerations must be given a proper place in the common agricultural policy not only in their own right but also because they can help to reduce production costs, improve the quality of products, diversify production, reduce surpluses and improve farmers' incomes. In this context, the Commission's proposals (COM(86)199, 21 April 1986) contain a set of measures beneficial to the environment, either because their objective is its protection or because their application will have favourable consequences for it.

### 1. Measures for the protection of the environment

- (a) More flexible application of the schemes for aid to investments necessary for the protection and improvement of the environment on farms;

The scheme for aid to investments will be rendered more flexible by the elimination of the ceilings now restricting the scope for strictly national aids to investments specifically made for the protection and improvement of the environment.

- (b) Adaptation of vocational training as regards farming practices compatible with the environment:

There are plans for an additional aid to vocational training of 2500 ECU per person attending courses or full training on reorientation of production, production methods compatible with the protection of the countryside, and the exploitation of woodlands.

- (c) Introduction of an environment management premium:

Following the authorization to grant national aids to farmers using production practices compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment (see Part Two, II.31.e) and the options in the Green Paper (see Part Three I.22.e), the Commission has proposed the introduction of an annual premium per hectare, reimbursable by the EAGGF.

The premium would be payable for farmers working in areas ranking as sensitive from the point of view of protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside, provided they undertook or were required to use farming practices compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment. The maximum amount eligible for the EAGGF would be 100 ECU/ha/year. However, in the less-favoured areas within the meaning of Directive 75/268/EEC, in which the compensatory allowance is paid, the maximum would be only 50% of the maximum amount eligible for the compensatory allowance.

## 2. Other measures supporting the environment

- (a) Compensatory allowance in less-favoured areas:

The payment of the compensatory allowance in the less-favoured areas within the meaning of Directive 75/268/EEC is designed to offset the higher production costs resulting from permanent natural handicaps (see Part Two, II.31.b). This enables farming to continue and the countryside thus to be protected. The maximum allowance is 101 ECU per livestock unit (LU) and per hectare.

The Commission has proposed that the ceiling be raised to 120 ECU per LU per hectare where nature is particularly hostile and that the allowance be restricted to 3000 ECU per man/year in order to discourage intensification harmful to the environment.



(b) "Extensification" premium for young farmers:

It is planned to grant a premium to farmers under 40 undertaking to "extensify" to a significant extent their farming. The maximum eligible for the EAGGF will be 100 ECU per year and per hectare involved in "extensification". It is obvious that production cuts can be obtained only by a reduction in the quantities of fertilizer and pesticide used and by a lower livestock density. The threats from over-farming will therefore be reduced. Provided it allows for a minimum of maintenance of the countryside, the incentive to "extensify" farming will promote the quality of the environment.

(c) Aid to "extensification" in the less-favoured areas:

The total of the compensatory allowance could be increased by 50% if the beneficiary, whatever his age, undertook to proceed to significant "extensification" of farming on his holding. This aid could not be combined with the "extensification" premium for young farmers, but would be of the same value for the environment.

(d) Early retirement with cessation of farming:

Farmers over 55 ceasing farming, whose holdings will no longer be used for agricultural production, could qualify for an annual allowance and an annual premium per hectare provided their farmland was given over either to afforestation or to a non-agricultural activity compatible with the maintenance of the quality of the environment, or was left unused subject to minimum maintenance with a view to the protection of the countryside. In all cases, this scheme enables farming to be discontinued whilst the countryside is protected.

(e) Aids to the establishment of producers' groups and to investment in the processing and marketing of products of "biological" farming:

The introduction of the expression "biological agriculture" and equivalent terms in Regulation (EEC) N° 355/77 and 1360/78 ranks as official recognition of this type of farming in Community legislation. The EAGGF reimbursement rate has been increased by five percentage points for investment programmes intended for the processing and marketing of products of biological agriculture; at the same time, the beneficiary's participation rate has been reduced by five percentage points. This incentive to biological farming should favour the quality of the environment, since this kind of farming uses less intensive production methods.

## CONCLUSION

Farming has done a great deal to create and maintain the countryside. It has enabled certain equilibria to be safeguarded in a modern economy which is highly urbanized and industrialized. However, this industry is undergoing a technical revolution which is changing cropping practices and involves dangers for the natural environment; it is also exposed to the pressures exerted by the other economic activities on the environment : urbanization, industry, transport.

More and more room has been found for environmental considerations in the common agricultural policy. The policy has encouraged the maintenance of family farms, which fit far better into the natural milieu than the industrial-type "off-land" units. The payment of income aids in the areas where nature is hostile has slowed down the drift from the land in the less-favoured regions and thus lessened the danger of desertification. Considerations as regards the environment have been introduced into regional measures for the development of agriculture.

The Commission's new guidelines acknowledge that the role played by agriculture in protecting and improving the quality of the environment can and must continue.

If this objective is to be achieved, attitudes must develop in two ways. In the first place, farmers must realize that certain constraints on the way they work and on changes in the way they work are indispensable not only because of market forces but also because the natural environment in which they operate is a precious asset which must be safeguarded for future generations. Secondly, the consumer and the taxpayer must realize that special services are rendered by farmers in the safeguard of the environment and that these services, where they entail constraints encroaching on incomes, must be properly remunerated.

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