

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION COMMUNITY

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICE

2100 M Street NW, Washington DC 20037 Telephone (202) 872-8350

New York Office: 277 Park Avenue, New York NY 10017 Telephone (212) 371-3804

04/1973

AGRICULTURE BACKGROUND

August 2, 1973

HOW COMMITTEES HELP RUN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY FARM POLICY

Various committees and working groups help carry out the European Community's common agricultural policy (CAP). The main types of committee are:

- management committees
- permanent (standing) committees
- advisory (consultative) committees
- Council of Ministers' working parties
- European Parliament agricultural committee
- Economic and Social Committee subcommittee on agriculture

Management Committees

These committees (*comites de gestion*) play an important part in day-to-day management of the CAP. The Community has a management committee for each commodity subject to common marketing rules. Management committees work with the Commission on those aspects of decision-making where the Commission has broad executive powers.

Committee members are usually government officials or (as in the case of the Netherlands) members of official organizations accredited to national governments.

A Commission official acts as non-voting chairman.

There are management committees for (number of meetings in 1972 in brackets):

- | | | | |
|---|------|-------------------------------------|------|
| ● beef and veal | (25) | ● cereals | (55) |
| ● eggs and poultrymeat | (20) | ● fats and oils | (31) |
| ● fisheries | (11) | ● flax and hemp | (4) |
| ● fruit and vegetables | (22) | ● processed fruit and
vegetables | (4) |
| ● hops | (1) | ● live plants & flowers | (1) |
| ● milk and dairy products | (38) | ● hogmeat | (13) |
| ● seeds | (5) | ● sugar | (53) |
| ● tobacco | (7) | ● wine | (18) |
| ● European Agricultural
Guidance and Guarantee
Fund | (15) | | |

After the Commission has drafted regulations for market management -- on the rate of export refunds or intervention buying, for example -- it submits them to the relevant management committee. Convened either by its chairman or at a member government request, the committee meets whenever necessary to consider the market situation and to examine new Commission measures.

In giving its opinion on Commission proposals, the committee uses a weighted voting system. France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom have 10 votes each. Belgium and the Netherlands have five each, Ireland and Denmark have three votes each, and Luxembourg has two votes, making a total of 58 votes.

When the Commission seeks to act -- for instance, to change the import levy on pork -- it submits a draft regulation to the appropriate management committee. If a weighted majority (41 of the 58 votes) of the committee opposes the Commission, the draft is enacted, but the Council of Ministers may reject or alter the measure within one month.

Such Commission decisions are rarely referred to the Council, as the Commission works closely with each committee and usually avoids action likely to encounter the committee's opposition. Management committees held 323 meetings in 1972 and the Commission subsequently issued about 1,000 CAP regulations.

The committee responsible for overseeing the administration of the Community's agricultural fund operates in a similar way to the other management committees.

Permanent Committees

Permanent committees -- also known as standing committees -- deal with sectors where political and technical issues may become intertwined. Each committee virtually combines the roles of a technical and a management committee. It consists of representatives of member states, with a Commission representative as chairman.

Permanent Committee on Agricultural Structures

Comprised of representatives of member states, this Committee studies national policies on farmholdings. It seeks to ensure that member states and the Commission keep one another informed on agricultural policy.

This Committee may use weighted voting in administering the farm-reform directives of March 1972. A similar committee exists for the fishing industry.

Permanent Committee on Seeds and Seedlings

This Committee advises the Commission when asked to do so, and can also demand to be consulted. When it has to vote on a Commission proposal -- for example, on changes in the common seeds catalogue -- votes are weighted.

Permanent Veterinary Committee

Made up of experts from Member States, this Committee ensures cooperation among the "Nine." Its members are not connected with the experts appointed by the Commission to give "opinions" in the animal-health and veterinary field -- for instance on slaughterhouse regulations.

When this Committee votes for a Commission proposal, it is carried out immediately. If the Committee votes against by a weighted majority, the Council of Ministers may overrule it by a simple majority.

Permanent Committee for Animal Feed

Consisting of government experts from member states, this Committee can recommend and vote on certain changes in Community legislation in this field. If it votes, by weighted majority, against a Commission proposal, the Council of Ministers has three months in which to intervene.

Advisory Committees

Representing professional agricultural and food organization, 16 advisory committees -- also known as consultative committees -- exist for each commodity sector of the common agricultural policy. They have from 24 to 46 members. They advise the Commission on technical aspects of draft Community legislation.

Within each committee, agricultural producers, as represented by the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations in the European Community (COPA) and the cooperative body, the General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Economic Community (EEC) have half the seats. Representatives of manufacturers or end users, dealers, workers, and consumers fill the remainder.

Membership on committees is for a three-year renewable term, after one year's probation. Members are unpaid, but the Community pays their expenses.

The Commission convenes meetings and provides the secretariat. Commission officials take part in meetings. The chairman can co-opt experts or staff from the central bodies of participating organizations to deal with specific questions.

As the committees are advisory there is no voting, except to elect officers. The Commission discusses its proposals with the committees, which then submit reports. If a committee is unanimous, it presents a joint conclusion in its report; if not, its report sets out the views of each participating section.

The formula of consultation as set out in Community legislation follows a standard pattern. For example, the decision to set up a committee on beef and veal reads: "The committee may be consulted by the Commission on all problems connected with the application of Reg. 14/64/EEC, on the progressive establishment of a common organization of the market in beef and veal and in particular any measures which the Commission may take under this regulation."

Advisory committees have been set up to deal with: beef and veal; fats; fruits and vegetables; cereals (sub-section for rice); flax and hemp; fisheries; milk and dairy products; poultrymeat and eggs; sugar, vine products; and farmholdings.

Council of Ministers Working Parties

The Council of Ministers sets up its own technical working parties for each area of Community policy. Senior officials of the Special Committee on Agriculture can submit draft legislation to these committees for consideration. The Committee of Permanent Representatives, which consists of the Member States' Ambassadors to the Community, coordinates the working parties.

European Parliament Committees

Standing committees, including the European Parliament's Agricultural Committee, carry out much of the European Parliament's work. They prepare reports on important Commission proposals for plenary sessions. The EP committees can work in closed session, if necessary. Commission members frequently brief them confidentially on the Commission's plans.

Economic and Social Committee Subcommittee

Like the European Parliament committees, the ESC agricultural subcommittee examines Commission proposals. It submits a report to the full Economic and Social Committee, which then transmits its opinion to the Council of Ministers.

