

School Fruit Scheme

2008/0146(CNS) - 18/11/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 586 votes to 47 with 41 abstentions, a legislative resolution, amending the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy and (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) in order to set up a School Fruit Scheme. The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Niels **BUSK** (ADLE, DK), on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

The main amendments – adopted in the framework of the consultation procedure – are as follows:

Fruit and vegetable of EU origin: Parliament states that Community aid shall be granted for supplying certain products of the fruit and vegetables and bananas sectors of EU origin, selected by the Commission, to be determined in more detail by the Member States. The Competent committee had wanted only fresh products to be selected for the programme, but this was rejected by the plenary.

Selection criteria: the Commission and Member States shall select fruit and vegetables, which shall be as fresh as possible, seasonal, and obtainable at low cost, on the basis of health criteria, such as the fewest possible unnatural and unhealthy additives. Local products should be used as a matter of priority in order to avoid unnecessary transport and the resulting environmental pollution. Organic and local fruit and vegetables shall, if available, be given particular consideration.

Budget: the Commission had proposed an allocation of EUR 90 million per school year. Members note that this corresponds to one piece of fruit one day a week for 30 weeks per year and covers children aged 6 to 10 years. They consider that there must be a far greater allocation of funds. A school fruit scheme should consist of a portion of fruit per pupil per day and not only be aimed at school children aged 6 to 10 years, as the Commission proposes, but also at pre-school children. The Community contribution should be EUR 500 million per school year.

Strategy: Member States, at national or regional level, wishing to participate in the scheme shall draw up a prior strategy for its implementation, taking account of the soil and climate conditions under which fruit and vegetables are produced. In this connection, Community preference of the products concerned shall be ensured. Under this strategy, Member States shall determine, inter alia: the products to be distributed, having regard to the seasonal and local nature of the products; the age groups of the beneficiary school population; the educational establishments participating in the Scheme. In accordance with objective criteria, Member States shall give priority to locally produced, traditional fruit and vegetables and support smaller farms in implementing the scheme.

Accompanying measures: these shall include the provision of health and dietary advice, information on the health benefits of fruit, appropriate to the age of the students, as well as information on the particular characteristics of organic farming.

Report: the evaluation report must examine: (a) the extent to which opting for national cofinancing, by means of a parental contribution, has or has not influenced the outreach and effectiveness of the scheme; (b) the relevance and impact of national accompanying measures, in particular the way in which the School Fresh Fruit Scheme and accompanying information on a healthy diet are incorporated into the national curriculum.

EU initiative: a new recital states that the School Fruit Scheme should be clearly identified as an EU initiative aimed at combating obesity in young people and developing their taste for fruit and vegetables. It should also serve, with the aid of appropriate educational programmes, to make children aware of the changing seasons in the course of a year. To that end, education authorities should, as a matter of priority, ensure the distribution of seasonal fruit, giving preference to a varied range of fruits so as to enable children to discover different tastes.

Complementarity: the scheme must not replace current national funding for existing multi-annual School Fruit Schemes or other school distribution schemes that include fruit. Community financing should be supplementary in nature and is reserved for new schemes or the extension of existing schemes.