

Food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Community

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Ministers were briefed by the Presidency and the Italian delegation on the future for a regulation concerning distribution of food products to the most deprived persons in the Union.

Considering the importance of this support scheme, (i.e. in 2008, more than 13 million people living in 18 member states benefited from this programme), the Presidency and the Italian delegation asked the Commission to submit, as soon as possible, proposals to amend the current system to ensure its future continuity. This request has the support of the Belgian, Bulgarian, Estonian, Spanish, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovene and Slovak delegations and some others.

The original rules provide that the EU can supply food from agricultural intervention stocks to those most in need. However, the phase-out of intervention stocks under the reform of the CAP has made this framework obsolete: the current scheme's reliance on market purchases for the provision of food has significantly increased, although it was originally supposed to be confined to situations of temporary unavailability of intervention stocks. Consequently, on April 2011, the European Court of Justice ruled that the current legal framework of this programme provided that amounts used for the scheme should come from intervention stocks and only marginal amounts should come from the open market.

The Commission presented an [amended proposal](#) on this subject to the Council in September 2010 but some delegations expressed reservations on this text, as was the case for the first proposal presented by the Commission in 2008, as regards the legal basis, which in their view should be drawn from social policy rather than agricultural policy. The Commission indicated its willingness to discuss on the basis of its revised proposal tabled in 2010 as soon as possible in order to limit the impact of the judicial decision on this programme.