

Food aid: conclusion of the Food Aid Convention 1999

1999/0131(CNS) - 22/06/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: approval of the Convention regarding food aid in the name of the Community in 1999.

CONTENT: The Convention regarding food aid was to have expired on 30 June 1998 and was extended for one year up to 30 June 1999 in order to provide for sufficient time for its renegotiation. A new text was agreed by the parties on 24 March 1999. The objective of this proposal is to permit the Community to approve the new 1999 Convention. This would seek to contribute to global food security and to improve international capacity to respond to emergency needs in terms of food and other food needs of developing countries. The main differences between the new Convention and its predecessor are the following : - the list of eligible products that can be supplied has been slightly broadened beyond cereals; - the measures relating to the coverage of transport costs and other operating costs linked to food aid were strengthened, in particular when the food aid is placed at the direct disposal of the least developed countries and in emergency situations; - the donors may from now on express their commitments in terms of tonnage or value or a combination of the two; - when their food aid is allocated, the members can give priority to the least developed and low income countries. Provision is also made that food aid provided to the least developed countries can be granted in the form of donations. In total, food aid supplied in this form will not represent less than 80% of the contribution of a member (more if possible); - the effectiveness and the impact of food aid operations will be improved, among other things, in terms of needs assessment, follow-up of aid supplied and cooperation between donors, the beneficiaries and the other parties concerned. Furthermore, there will be absolutely no link between the supply of food aid and commercial exports of goods and services to beneficiary countries. The new Convention also contains more specific provisions aimed at promoting the development of local agriculture and eventual 'triangular transactions' and 'local purchases'. Neither can it predetermine future negotiations nor impose a limiting framework on them, including those arising in the context of the WTO, concerning the status and the supply of food aid on preferential credit conditions. For it to be applicable, the new Convention will have to be the subject of ratification by at least the government-parties holding 75% of the votes. It will be opened for ratification by its member-parties (including the Community) from 11 May to 30 June 1999 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Given that the time limit set will not permit the Community to approve the Convention, given its internal procedures, the Community will have to make a declaration facilitating the application, on a provisional basis, of the Convention in question (see procedure 1999/0130 ACC on this point).