



Procedure file

Basic information		
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1997/2293(COS)	Procedure completed
Forestry measures in agriculture: Community aid scheme (implem. regul. 2080/92/EEC). Report		
Subject 3.10.11 Forestry policy		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur
	 Agriculture and Rural Development		Appointed 03/02/1998
			PPE OTILA Jyrki
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion
Council of the European Union	 Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection		Appointed
			The committee decided not to give an opinion.

Key events			
28/11/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0630	Summary
16/02/1998	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/09/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
28/09/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0346/1998	
22/10/1998	Debate in Parliament		
23/10/1998	Decision by Parliament	T4-0629/1998	Summary
23/10/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
09/11/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1997/2293(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 142
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(1997)0630	28/11/1997	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0346/1998 OJ C 328 26.10.1998, p. 0005	28/09/1998	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0629/1998 OJ C 341 09.11.1998, p. 0362-0367	23/10/1998	EP	Summary

Forestry measures in agriculture: Community aid scheme (implem. regul. 2080/92/EEC). Report

OBJECTIVE: to present a report on the application of Regulation (EEC) No 2080/92 instituting a Community aid scheme for forestry measures in agriculture. **CONTENT:** the Commission report is based on the results of the application of the regulation from 1993 to 1996, a limited period which does not allow any definitive conclusions to be drawn on the application of the regulation. The Commission notes that afforestation of farmland under the regulation was concentrated mainly in four countries: Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Portugal. The area planted in these Member States in fact represented 81% of the total area planted in the European Union and 56% of the total number of beneficiaries. The regulation was therefore applied mainly in the Member States or regions where there was a political will to extend the forest area. In terms of area, over 65% of afforestation was in areas classified as fire-risk zones under Regulation (EEC) 2158/92 on protection of forests against fire. Afforestation of these zones is an efficient method of combating soil erosion and climatic change. After just three years of application, the Commission has made the following findings for each of the three policies to which the objectives of the regulation are linked: a) objectives in relation to the CAP: although afforestation has had little impact on the reduction of excessive agricultural production, its contribution to rural development should not be overlooked (dynamic approach to land use and maintenance of the countryside); b) objectives in relation to environmental policy: in order for afforestation to have a positive effect on the compatibility of management of the countryside with environmental equilibrium, several rules need to be respected with regard to the framework and conditions applicable to afforestation programmes, their location and the choice of planting methods. The programmes need to be amended and improved on this count in order to avoid non-respect or random interpretation of environmental conditions. Although afforestation has made a modest contribution in combating the greenhouse effect, the Commission considers that the policy of afforestation of farmland is an important factor in the overall environmental policy to which the European Union subscribed at the Rio Conference in 1992; c) objectives in relation to forestry policies: the Commission emphasizes that the Member States which apply a national afforestation policy have benefitted from the relative flexibility of the Community framework laid down in the regulation and have chosen options which are in line with this policy and concentrated either on the development of their wood-based industries or on the environmental and social functions of the woodland created. This applied in particular to Ireland and the United Kingdom.?

Forestry measures in agriculture: Community aid scheme (implem. regul. 2080/92/EEC). Report

The Committee adopted the report by Jyrki OTILA (EPP, Fin) on the EU scheme to boost forestry measures on farmland. This is one of the flanking measures under the reform of the CAP (others include environmental measures and early retirement schemes). The scheme is supposed to promote afforestation as an alternative use of farmland and encourage the development of forestry activities so as to compensate farmers for income losses due to lower agricultural production. There should also be spin-offs in the form of a better ecological balance and other environmental benefits. The committee says the main aim has not been achieved, there being little evidence that it has helped farmers. It claims there has been only a small reduction in farmland - mainly the least productive land. It argues that the scheme has focused more on changing or improving the existing forestry industry rather than on introducing flanking measures for agriculture. It also says that implementation of the scheme has been uneven (four Member States alone account for more than 50 000 hectares, i.e. 81% of the total area involved). It is therefore important to establish better priorities for the use of EU funds. The committee criticises the Commission's distinction between farmers (25% of whose income must derive from farming their land) and non-farmers. Aid is granted differently on the basis of this distinction. As a result, the premium intended to cover income losses has not been granted in regions with large numbers of part-time farmers (southern Europe) or to small farms linked to large forestry estates (northern Europe). In such cases, the distinction varies and is difficult to justify. The committee argues that the Commission's report, which is simply a progress report, is not enough and that an evaluation report is needed to assess the effectiveness of the scheme, which costs ECU 2.9bn (1.3bn from EU funds and 1.6bn provided by the Member States). It therefore calls on the Commission to publish an evaluation report as soon as possible, containing more information on the operation of the scheme (e.g. premiums granted, sectors in which the scheme has been applied, types of forestry or of afforested regions created or improved, the amount of funds contributed by the Member States) as well as other technical data. Lastly, the committee says the Court of Auditors should review the operation of the scheme and submit to Parliament a cost/benefit assessment (with a comparative analysis of the other flanking measures - agri-environmental measures and set-aside) so as to give a better overall picture of how far these schemes, which have cost the EU several billion ecus, have succeeded.?

Forestry measures in agriculture: Community aid scheme (implem. regul. 2080/92/EEC). Report

Adopting the report by Mr Jyrki Otila (EPP, FIN) on the Community aid scheme for forestry measures, Parliament considers that the main objective of the regulation has not been achieved as there is little evidence that the scheme has contributed to compensating farmers for reducing agricultural production; where there has been a reduction of agricultural land, it has both been very small and the land withdrawn has been the least productive. Parliament regrets that in most Member States the scheme has had little effect in terms of environmental, rural or

forestry development (plots of land affected have been small, widely dispersed and fragmented). The scheme has been applied unevenly, with only four Member States participating to the extent of more than 50 000 hectares, accounting for 81% of total hectares. The distinction between farmers and non-farmers has not operated successfully. Parliament therefore calls on the Commission to publish an evaluation report indicating the levels of premia that have been paid, the areas where the scheme has been applied, the amount of agricultural production that has been reduced, the levels of compensation paid, the woodland created by afforestation, the levels of Member State contributions, etc. Parliament calls on the Court of Auditors to examine the operation of this scheme and report back to Parliament with its own evaluation of costs and benefits. ?