


Procedure file

Basic information	
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) 1997/2296(COS)	Procedure completed
Agricultural production compatible with environmental requirements and countryside (implem. Regul. 2078/92/EEC)	
Subject 3.10.01 Agricultural structures and holdings, farmers 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity	

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

Key events			
04/12/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0620	Summary
16/02/1998	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/09/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
28/09/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0345/1998	
22/10/1998	Debate in Parliament		
23/10/1998	Decision by Parliament	T4-0628/1998	Summary
23/10/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
09/11/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1997/2296(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 050; Rules of Procedure EP 142

Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/4/09586

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document	COM(1997)0620	04/12/1997	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A4-0345/1998 OJ C 328 26.10.1998, p. 0005	28/09/1998	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T4-0628/1998 OJ C 341 09.11.1998, p. 0362-0365	23/10/1998	EP	Summary

Agricultural production compatible with environmental requirements and countryside (implem. Regul. 2078/92/EEC)

OBJECTIVE: this Commission report deals with the application of Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 on agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside. **SUBSTANCE:** the first part of the report describes the operation of the agri-environmental regulation. The second part explains how it integrates with the common agricultural policy and the other instruments of Community policy. The third part reports on its implementation up to 1997. The last part draws a certain number of conclusions and presents recommendations taking into account the growing role occupied by agri-environmental programmes under Agenda 2000: a) the Commission intends to produce and present working documents on the following aspects of implementation of the programmes: - implementation in the Member States; - support for organic farming; - support for maintaining genetic resources; - evaluation studies and Community-funded research and studies; - training and demonstration projects; b) the Commission will continue to encourage Member States: - to make the best use of existing opportunities for integrating the agri-environment programme with structural fund programmes; - to develop non-premia programmes for disseminating information to farmers; - to implement fully those programmes which are behind schedule; c) the Commission is considering bringing forward several proposals for the adjustment of the provisions of Regulation 2078/92, including: - an improved legal framework for the non-land management measures; - a review of the system of maximum part-financible premia; - a review of the measure to reduce stock numbers to focus on low-intensity pasture management; - a review of criteria for incorporation of capital investments and landscape and historical farmland features within programmes; - a review of the measure for environmental set aside; - possibilities for the provision for part-financing from Community funds of monitoring and evaluation costs; - review of Community part-financing rates. In addition, in the context of Agenda 2000 the Commission will bring forward a proposal to strengthen agri-environmental measures within regional and zonal programmes. Finally, the Commission will investigate ways and means and terms of reference for establishing an observatory of environmentally beneficial agriculture. ?

Agricultural production compatible with environmental requirements and countryside (implem. Regul. 2078/92/EEC)

The committee adopted the report by M. John IVERSEN (PSE, DK) on agricultural production methods compatible with the environment and the countryside. (Hughes procedure). The committee considered that, because the Commission's report wasn't an evaluation of the regulation's enforcement, but merely a statement of activity, it was impossible to draw from it a comprehensive and definitive judgement on the effectiveness of the scheme. It was not possible to verify if its objectives (ie. the reduction production, produced environmental benefits, or provided income to farmers as a replacement for losses incurred) had been attained. Considering the high cost of the scheme (3.8 billion ECU from EAGGF expenditure - 6.2 billion ECU including Member States' contributions), the rapporteur deemed it "a surprising state of affairs". The committee took note that in many Member States the scheme had been implemented very late and, in some cases, inadequately, despite the fact that it was a mandatory and integral part of the 1992 agricultural reform. By the mid of the 1997 financial year, 1.35 million agreements had been signed (=17% of farmers and holdings in the Union) relating to 127 zonal programmes. This represents almost 3.8 billion ECU in Community financing at the end of 1997 (estimates for that year) and 6.2 billion ECU in total (including funding from the Member States). The Commission stresses that these figures are much lower than the initial estimates and that the programmes have been applied very differently depending on the country. Five Member States - namely Austria, Germany, France, Finland and Italy - accounted for 86% of the expenditure. In terms of utilised agricultural area (UAA) the most widespread programmes were in Austria, Luxembourg and Finland, with over 70% UAA, and coverage of over 30% in Sweden and Germany. In France, Ireland and Portugal coverage was around 10-15%, in the UK it was less than 10% while in Italy, Denmark, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium and Greece it was extremely low (around or under 5%). The Commission report did not clearly name the reasons for this uneven application. The rapporteur believes that where intensive farming is produced, it is simply not worth reducing intensive practices in order to take advantage of the agri-environmental measures. Agri-environment programmes are part-financed by the Community (EAGGF Guarantee Section) at the rate of 75% in Objective 1 regions or 50% in other regions. The balance of the co-financial programme is paid by the Member State or region. The committee was of the opinion that farmers should receive agri-environmental payments in proportion to the efforts they have undertaken to protect or enhance the environment and the loss of yields and production involved, taking into account the diversity of prevailing circumstances (soil, climate, etc). In this connection the levels of premia should be re-examined in order to better target them, and to encourage cross-compliance. It considered necessary to widen the scope of the scheme to help with local planning, provision of advice, access to information, dissemination of research results, amend regulatory measures including local planning laws, and with the use of new technology. It believed in fact that a wide array of approaches was likely to be more successful than agricultural policy reform alone, or just the application of the present agri-environmental scheme. In conclusion, the rapporteur said that the present regulation needed: - clearer defined objectives (including a statement of the quantitative improvements which farmers must achieve in applying the programme.); - improved evaluation (this should be done by the Member States,

with regular monitoring and evaluation submitted to the Commission. If Member States do not provide evaluation with proper justification or do not apply the regulation, sanctions should be used); - more specific targeting; - different classification of expenditure to give the EP considerably more say in the application of these funds. The agriculture committee called on the Commission to publish an evaluation report as soon as possible, giving precise details of the application and impact of the programme and pointed out that this will require improvements to the methodology of evaluation, to comparability between the Member States, and a better scientific monitoring. It asked for better co-operation between Member States and the Commission, and the provision of additional finance towards the costs of evaluation and follow-up; believed that such an evaluation is essential before the scheme is extended in the context of Agenda 2000?

Agricultural production compatible with environmental requirements and countryside (implem. Regul. 2078/92/EEC)

Adopting the report by Mr John Iversen (PES, DK) on the environment and agricultural production, Parliament considers that the Commission report on the application of regulation (EEC) 2078/92 on agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside is not an evaluation and it is therefore impossible to make a comprehensive judgement on the effectiveness of the scheme. It hopes that the regulation's objectives will be clarified and more performance-related and that the levels of premia should be increased in some specific cases. Application of the programme has been affected by a lack of preparation and Parliament regrets that 86% of expenditure has been accounted for in five Member States and calls on the Commission to publish an evaluation report as soon as possible giving precise details of the application and impact of the programme. Parliament also considers: - that farmers should only receive specific funds if they demonstrate a commitment to the agri- environment programmes (environmental benefits must be visible and clear), - that the agri-environment programme should cover all land where farmers are making efforts to enhance the environment and be extended to less favoured areas, - that the requirement for 20 year set-aside in some cases is too long and that a more flexible variant should be introduced, - that the scheme should be widened in other ways (help with local planning, provision of advice, access to information, dissemination of research results, use of new technologies). ?