



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2008/2066(INI)	Procedure completed
Situation and prospects of agriculture in mountainous regions		
Subject		
3.10.01 Agricultural structures and holdings, farmers		
3.10.01.06 Less-favoured agricultural areas		
4.70.06 Outlying and outermost regions, overseas countries and territories		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		18/12/2007
		PPE-DE EBNER Michl	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	REGI Regional Development		08/04/2008
		PSE BOURZAI Bernadette	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Agriculture and Rural Development	FISCHER BOEL Mariann	

Key events			
13/03/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		
14/07/2008	Vote in committee, 1st reading/single reading		Summary
30/07/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A6-0327/2008	
22/09/2008	Debate in Parliament		
23/09/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/09/2008	Decision by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	T6-0438/2008	Summary
23/09/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2008/2066(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 052; Rules of Procedure EP 052-p4
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/6/60400

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report			PE404.526	08/05/2008	EP
Amendments tabled in committee			PE407.640	12/06/2008	EP
Committee opinion	REGI		PE405.917	26/06/2008	EP
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading			A6-0327/2008	30/07/2008	EP
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading			T6-0438/2008	23/09/2008	EP Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary			SP(2008)6073	17/10/2008	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary			SP(2008)6487	29/01/2009	

2008/2066(INI) - 14/07/2008 Vote in committee, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted an own initiative report by Michl EBNER (EPP-ED, IT) on the situation and outlook for hill and mountain farming.

The report recalls that mountain areas account for 40% of Europe's total surface area and are home to 19% of Europe's population. These areas are, in many respects, 'disadvantaged' due to permanent natural handicaps, resulting in their gradual desertification and declining agricultural production. However, there are vast differences in the actions taken by Member States on mountain areas (particularly high mountains and highlands), which are based on purely sectoral rather than integral development.

The Committee on Agriculture calls for particular attention to be paid to mountain regions and urges the Commission to develop an integrated EU strategy for mountain areas within six months of the adoption of this resolution. It also calls for national action programmes containing specific implementation measures to be drawn up on this basis by arrangement with regional authorities and civil society representatives, with account to be taken of existing regional initiatives.

The report stresses the role played by hill and mountain farming in production, in the cross-sectoral maintenance and utilisation of landscapes and as a multifunctional basis for other sectors of the economy and characteristic feature of traditional cultural landscapes and social fabrics. In this context, MEPs call for specific and greater account to be taken of the multifunctionality of mountain and hill farming in future CAP reforms by bringing the framework directives for rural development and national programmes into line with the role of mountain and hill farmers.

The committee believes that compensatory payments for mountain areas (in particular in highland and high mountain areas) should continue, in future, to be exclusively geared towards offsetting permanent natural disadvantages and additional costs stemming from farming difficulties. In this respect, they emphasise that the needs of mountain areas cannot be met by rural development funding alone.

According to MEPs, the strategy should:

- provide more assistance for young farmers and equal opportunities for women and men and ensure that the demographic balance is maintained in those areas that often face problems arising from urban migration;
- ensure a high level of services of general economic interest, improve the accessibility and interconnection of mountain areas and provide the necessary infrastructure, particularly as regards passenger and freight transport, education, the knowledge-based economy and communication networks (including broadband access);
- provide special financial assistance for the dairy sector (dairy farmers and processors) and additional funds from the first pillar, in particular in the form of a dairy cow premium;
- establish additional per-hectare payments for organic farming and extensive grazing and provide support for investments in livestock facilities appropriate to the species;
- include measures to protect and promote regional and traditional products or their manufacturing procedures and their certification and to safeguard them from imitations;
- provide incentives for the protection and the sustainable use of mountain pastures, grassland, forests and other less favoured, sensitive areas in order to regenerate and re-grass them, protect them from erosion, promote rational management of water resources and combat unwelcome developments;
- establish repositories of indigenous genetic material from animal and plant species.

The report emphasises the importance of a long-term forestry strategy that creates prevention, response and compensatory mechanisms in crisis situations (e.g. storms) and incentives for integrated forest management. With regards to water management, the Commission should encourage local and regional authorities to develop a sense of solidarity between downstream and upstream users, including through appropriate funding to support the sustainable use of water resources in mountain regions.

Stressing that mountain areas are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, the report calls on the Commission, the Member States and the competent regional and local authorities to promote the immediate implementation of measures to provide protection against natural disasters. MEPs stress the need to ensure comprehensive anti-erosion protection for soil as well as to build and conserve aquifers in order to minimise the risks of flooding and soil erosion and to prevent drought and forest fires and also for the purpose of increasing the supply of groundwater and surface water in the countryside.

MEPs also stress the significance of introducing an integrated approach to decision-making and administrative procedures such as regional

planning, the licensing of construction projects and the refurbishment of dwellings by means of environmental, heritage and urban-planning practices, with a view to ensuring sustainable development in mountain areas. The report recommends that the potential of mountain areas should be exploited in order to promote the comprehensive development of tourism and the use of innovation in land development.

Lastly, MEPs highlight the importance of the voluntary sector (especially mountain rescue, civil protection, charities) with regard to services and the cultural and natural heritage in the mountains. They consider it necessary to invest in local, advanced training centres in agricultural economy for mountain areas, so as to train professionals with the ability to manage activities in a mountain environment, protect the land and develop agriculture.

2008/2066(INI) - 23/09/2008 Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 487 votes to 73, with 54 abstentions, a resolution on the situation and outlook for hill and mountain farming.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration by Michl EBNER (EPP-ED, IT) on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

The resolution recalls that mountain areas account for 40% of Europe's total surface area and are home to 19% of Europe's population. These areas are, in many respects, 'disadvantaged' due to permanent natural handicaps, resulting in their gradual desertification and declining agricultural production. However, there are vast differences in the actions taken by Member States on mountain areas (particularly high mountains and highlands), which are based on purely sectoral rather than integral development.

Integrated strategy: Parliament calls for particular attention to be paid to mountain regions and urges the Commission to develop an integrated EU strategy for mountain areas within six months of the adoption of this resolution. It also calls for national action programmes containing specific implementation measures to be drawn up on this basis by arrangement with regional authorities and civil society representatives, with account to be taken of existing regional initiatives.

Multifunctionality: the resolution emphasises the role played by hill and mountain farming in production, in the cross-sectoral maintenance and utilisation of landscapes and as a multifunctional basis for other sectors of the economy and characteristic feature of traditional cultural landscapes and social fabrics. In this context, it calls for specific and greater account to be taken of the multifunctionality of mountain and hill farming in future CAP reforms by bringing the framework directives for rural development and national programmes into line with the role of mountain and hill farmers not only as producers but also as economic forerunners for other sectors.

Compensatory payments: Parliament emphasises that compensatory payments for mountain areas (in particular in highland and high mountain areas) should continue and that they should, in future, be exclusively geared towards offsetting permanent natural disadvantages and additional costs stemming from farming difficulties, that such payments are justified in the long term due to the lack of alternative production and that full decoupling would lead to a systematic reduction in activity affecting all sectors; emphasises that the needs of mountain areas cannot be met by rural development funding alone.

Proposed measures: according to MEPs, the strategy should:

- provide more assistance for young farmers and equal opportunities for women and men and ensure that the demographic balance is maintained in those areas that often face problems arising from urban migration;
- ensure a high level of services of general economic interest, improve the accessibility and interconnection of mountain areas and provide the necessary infrastructure, particularly as regards passenger and freight transport, education, the knowledge-based economy and communication networks (including broadband access);
- provide special financial assistance for the dairy sector (dairy farmers and processors) and additional funds from the first pillar, in particular in the form of a dairy cow premium;
- establish additional per-hectare payments for organic farming and extensive grazing and provide support for investments in livestock facilities appropriate to the species;
- include measures to protect and promote regional and traditional products or their manufacturing procedures and their certification and to safeguard them from imitations;
- provide incentives for the protection and the sustainable use of mountain pastures, grassland, forests and other less favoured, sensitive areas in order to regenerate and re-grass them, protect them from erosion, promote rational management of water resources and combat unwelcome developments;
- establish repositories of indigenous genetic material from animal and plant species.

Climate change: Parliament emphasises the importance of a long-term forestry strategy that takes into account the effects of climate change, the natural life cycle and natural composition of the forest ecosystem, and creates prevention, response and compensatory mechanisms in crisis situations (e.g. storms and forest fires) and incentives for integrated forest management. It stresses the importance of the issue of water management in mountain areas and calls on the Commission to encourage local and regional authorities to develop a sense of solidarity between downstream and upstream users, including through appropriate funding to support the sustainable use of water resources in these areas. It also stresses that mountain areas are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and calls on the Commission, the Member States and the competent regional and local authorities to promote the immediate implementation of measures to provide protection against natural disasters, in particular forest fires, in those regions. Parliament points out that thorough and comprehensive anti-erosion protection for soil, buildings and the conservation of aquifers must be provided as a constituent part of farming and forestry practice in order to minimise the risks of flooding and soil erosion and to prevent drought and forest fires and also for the purpose of increasing the supply of groundwater and surface water in the countryside.

Sustainable tourism: MEPs stress the significance of introducing an integrated approach to decision-making and administrative procedures such as regional planning, the licensing of construction projects and the refurbishment of dwellings by means of environmental, heritage and urban-planning practices, with a view to ensuring sustainable development in mountain areas.

The resolution recommends that the potential of mountain areas should be exploited in order to promote the comprehensive development of tourism and the use of innovation in land development and, to that end, encourages local, decentralised initiatives and cooperation between mountain areas. Lastly, it highlights the importance of the voluntary sector (especially mountain rescue, civil protection and charities) with regard to services and the cultural and natural heritage in the mountains and considers it to be necessary to invest in local, advanced training

centres in agricultural economy for mountain areas, so as to train professionals with the ability to manage activities in a mountain environment, protect the land and develop agriculture.