

Tuesday, 13 October 1987

- having regard to Council Regulation (EEC) No 1707/86 on the conditions governing imports of agricultural products originating in third countries following the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power-station ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 April 1987 on the problem of contamination of foodstuffs following the Chernobyl disaster ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. A2-154/87),
 - having consulted the Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizens' Rights, pursuant to Rule 36 (3) of the Rules of Procedure and adopted the argument put forward in the opinion contained in Doc. A2-154/87,
1. Disputes, on the basis of Rule 36 (3) of the Rules of Procedure, the appropriateness of the legal base chosen by the Commission for its proposal for a regulation;
 2. Considers that Article 31 of the Euratom Treaty, requiring the Commission and Council respectively to work out and establish the basic standards for the protection of the health of workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionizing radiations, is inapplicable in this instance;
 3. Believes that the legal base for the proposal for a regulation should be Article 100 A of the EEC Treaty (completion of the internal market);
 4. Urges the Commission to amend its proposal for a regulation, pursuant to Article 149 (3) of the EEC Treaty, by invoking Article 100 A as the sole legal base;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 146, 31. 5. 1986, p. 88.

⁽²⁾ OJ No C 125, 11. 5. 1987, p. 91.

3. Mountain regions

- Doc. A2-82/87

RESOLUTION

on the mountain regions

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission study entitled 'Integrated development of the mountain regions. Particular case of the Alpine arc' (Regional Policy Series, No 20),
 - having regard to the studies recently carried out by the Economic and Social Committee,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 February 1986 on agriculture and environment ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning and the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Doc. A2-82/87),
- A. whereas, despite the difficulties involved in providing a precise definition of mountain regions, they cover just over half the area of the Community and contain a significant proportion of the population,

⁽¹⁾ OJ No C 68, 24. 3. 1986, p. 80.

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- B. whereas, according to Directive 75/268/EEC on mountain and hill farming and farming in certain less-favoured areas ⁽¹⁾, 52 % of the utilized agricultural area is classed as less-favoured areas and 16 % as mountain regions,
- C. whereas although the problems affecting the mountain regions of the Mediterranean countries are qualitatively different from those affecting northern countries where the climate is more rigorous, there exist nevertheless a number of commonly-shared difficulties with which the inhabitants of all mountain regions must contend and these include:
- (i) the rigorous climate and the poor quality of the soil, which effectively limit agricultural activity to mountain agriculture (principally sheep rearing) and, to a certain extent, dairy production and forestry,
 - (ii) low population density, which increases the unit cost of basic services such as public transport, public health, education and social welfare,
 - (iii) limited employment opportunities and relatively low salary levels,
 - (iv) poor communications due in part to the difficult terrain,
 - (v) seasonal population movements, which severely test the infrastructures and the environment at certain times of the year and create unemployment during the closed season,
 - (vi) environmental risks such as erosion, floods and avalanches,
 - (vii) the emigration of the young population who head for more populated regions offering a wider range of employment and services,
- D. whereas regional planning and environmental protection are essential in mountain areas, particularly to ensure a balance between the interests of the local population and those of people who are not resident in mountain areas but wish to pursue to organize leisure activities there,
- E. noting also the importance of a clean and healthy environment both for agriculture and tourism and emphasizing the beneficial effects that Community policy aimed at limiting pollution and, more generally, protecting the environment can have for mountain areas,
- F. pointing out, in particular, the need to reconcile respect for traditional architecture and the protection of the architectural and natural heritage with the aims of economic development,
- G. whereas it is of great strategic and economic importance for the Community that active local populations continue to inhabit mountain areas throughout the year, although this will not be possible unless they are offered conditions comparable to those which the inhabitants of more densely populated areas at lower altitudes enjoy as regards education, cultural activities and social services,
- H. whereas the increase in the number of second homes occupied only for a part of the year pushes up property prices and increases local authority expenditure on basic services,
- I. whereas the natural handicaps affecting mountain areas such as those in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Scotland in the case of the United Kingdom, and Corsica in the case of France, are often exacerbated by the distance of these regions from major national and European population centres,
- J. noting that latitude can be as important as altitude in determining climatic disadvantages in mountain regions,
- K. noting that mountain areas often coincide with national frontiers (for example the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Ardennes) so that they are all eligible for the programmes applicable in transborder regions, the implementation of which is encouraged by the ERDF Regulation,

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 128, 19. 5. 1975, p. 1.

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- L. whereas the economy of mountain areas is greatly dependent on the primary sector (agriculture and forestry) and the tertiary sector (mainly tourism) while the role of processing industries is relatively small,
- M. whereas it is essential for mountain areas to enjoy balanced, economic development and for agriculture and forestry to remain economically viable activities,
- N. regretting the fact that as a result of natural conditions and unfavourable economic trends, the gap in agricultural incomes between the mountain areas and other regions is steadily increasing, with the result that huge areas run the risk of being depopulated,
- O. convinced that only mountain agriculture will be able to maintain the population density necessary to guarantee an adequate level of public services in rural areas: garbage collection, schools, transport, socio-cultural activities, etc.,
- P. whereas in view of the cost of transporting materials to and from mountain areas, the most appropriate kind of industry is processing industry with a high added value where transport does not play an important part in the cost of the end products,
- Q. whereas the kind of industry that has been developed in the mountain regions of Switzerland is an example that could usefully be followed,
- R. whereas although major international communication routes cross the mountain regions, where they cause pollution and congestion, regional and local road networks are, by contrast, often inadequate,
- S. whereas the ERDF has made a major contribution to improving road networks in the mountain regions and ways of communication between these regions and the more densely populated lowland areas and urban areas,
- T. noting that the Community already provides support for the development of mountain regions, mainly within the framework of the EAGGF (Guidance Section) — in particular by means of Directive 75/268/EEC and Council Regulation (EEC) No 797/85 (1) — the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund,

1. Considers that a strategy should be introduced at Community level, based on an integrated approach to the problems of development of the mountain regions and strict environmental safeguards, to encourage those living in mountain areas to remain there and attract new permanent residents into these areas; considers that such a strategy should satisfy the residents' fundamental needs for decent living conditions, by guaranteeing public amenities and implementing their right to accommodation, and should deal with, for example, the various aspects of landed property and, in particular, the protection of the small landowners;

2. Notes that problems may be encountered in the formulation of Community criteria to define mountain regions, and considers that any altitude parameters would have to take account of the effects of latitude and climate on the agricultural potential of the regions concerned; considers, in this respect, that mountain region status should be accorded at much lower altitudes in Ireland and Scotland than in southern regions, where the climatic conditions are less harsh;

3. Recommends that regional planning regulations should be implemented at national and local level so as to guarantee that the local property and land market in mountain regions will continue to provide permanent residents with reasonably priced accommodation;

Agriculture

4. Notes that mountain agriculture and forestry, besides producing foodstuffs and high quality raw materials, guarantee that the land is used and maintained in keeping with the requirements associated with environmental preservation and protection, thereby fulfilling an ecological and safeguard role;

(1) OJ No L 93, 30. 3. 1985, p. 1.

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5. Is convinced that only mountain farming can maintain the level of population required for adequate provision in the countryside of public utilities and educational, transport and recreational facilities;

Economic development of mountain areas

6. Notes that a number of high-technology firms, which are often small undertakings, require a quiet and clean environment, which is exactly what the mountain areas offer, and recommends that the Community measures aimed at encouraging small and medium-sized undertakings take full account of the requirements and specific characteristics of mountain regions;

7. Is unfortunately compelled to note that disparities in income between farms in mountain and other regions are constantly widening because of the frequently unfavourable physical and economic conditions, with the inherent risk that large areas will be depopulated;

Transport infrastructures in mountain areas

8. Recommends that Community transport policy seeks to improve intra-Community communications without damaging the vulnerable environment of the mountain areas and supports local and regional communications in these regions;

The environment in the mountain areas

9. Regrets that the draft resolution submitted by the Commission concerning the continuation and implementation of a European Community policy and action programme on the environment (1987-1992) (COM(86) 485 final) does not give more importance to the specific problems of mountain regions and urges the Commission to remedy this oversight;

Recommendations

10. Recommends the implementation of the following measures:

- tax exemption for mountain farms under definitive arrangements at Community level;
- greater encouragement for the improvement of farming structures and infrastructures, particularly in areas affected by emigration;
- exemption — for smallholdings at least — from any imposed restrictions on production such as the co-responsibility levy or production quotas;
- encouragement for part-time working for small-scale farmers;
- encouragement for farm holidays so as to create an additional income for the holding;
- direct payments to mountain farmers, the aim being to recompense mountain farmers for their contribution to the economy as a whole and to make the necessary compensatory income adjustments; such direct payments should be production-related and large enough to provide an effective incentive for farmers to continue working their holdings;
- setting-up a system of low-interest, long-term loans as a means of supporting and developing these farms;
- higher compensatory payments as a means of at least partially offsetting the natural disadvantages;
- exclusion of social benefits, in cases where they constitute the only other resource, from the calculation of compensatory payments;

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- creation of secondary job opportunities for small farmers; small farmers can earn a reasonable income for a family only if, in addition to farming, they have employment outside the farm which provides additional income; this is only possible if the secondary job is located at a reasonable distance; support for such development programmes should be determined with regard to the level of prosperity in the region concerned;
- subsidization of accelerated reforestation programmes in regions affected by environmental disasters caused by fires, particularly in the Mediterranean countries;

11. Recommends that aid to the mountain regions should also be used to promote tourism and arts and crafts and to stimulate activities in the industrial and service sectors, such as the food-processing industry, which can be established in these areas, enhancing the economic and social life of the mountain regions by making better use of their resources;

12. Considers that it would be possible to implement, on behalf of mountain regions, integrated operations and, in particular, large-scale plans aimed at:

- (i) the improvement of road, railway and air routes;
- (ii) the coherent development of tourism;
- (iii) the improvement of agricultural productivity with a view to increasing production destined for local consumption or in sectors — such as the timber sector — where the Community is deficient;
- (iv) examination of the possibilities for maximizing alternative energy sources that respect the environment, such as water resources, wind power and the biomass;
- (v) the development of small undertakings;
- (vi) special measures for areas cut off by snow;
- (vii) measures to develop beekeeping in the mountain regions;
- (viii) subsidization of supplementary employment programmes for the people living in mountain regions in order to improve their standard of living (manual jobs, craft industries and cottage industries);

13. Calls for the promotion and development of a Community forestry policy;

14. Considers that the creation of nature parks in mountain regions should provide an opportunity for safeguarding natural features and the landscape and trying out modern economic activities with the dual aim of protecting the land and offering new job opportunities for the inhabitants;

15. Calls on the Commission to draft a communication detailing the ways in which the Community could help to promote economic and social development in the mountain regions;

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16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Commission and the Council.
