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1. Expresses its concern and deep sympathy with the populations and the governments of the countries affected;
  2. Calls on the Council and the Commission to make a rapid assessment of the consequences of the drought and to introduce effective aid mechanisms to help to alleviate the famine;
  3. Calls on the Council and the Commission, when drawing up the 2002 budget, to take into account these special circumstances, to ensure recognition of the financial aid needed to cover the basic needs of the affected populations in the region;
  4. Recommends that the Council and the Commission should consider the cyclical and worsening nature of the Central American drought and promote sustainable development policies resulting in a specific programme for agriculture aid measures which will help to prevent drought and deterioration of the environment in the worst hit areas of Central America;
  5. Calls on the Commission to urge the governments of Central America to accept their responsibilities in the face of this chronic problem and to adopt public policies aimed at revitalising the rural sectors which are most vulnerable from the social and economic points of view;
  6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Central American countries and the Central American Parliament.
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**22. Mountain farming****A5-0277/2001****European Parliament resolution on 25 years' application of Community legislation for hill and mountain farming (2000/2222(INI))***The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the United Nations decision to proclaim 2002 International Year of Mountains, and to the Johannesburg 'Rio+10' meeting, which will further consider Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, relating to mountains,
  - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 1998 on a new strategy for mountain, less-favoured and environmentally sensitive regions <sup>(1)</sup>,
  - having regard to Council Directive 75/268/EEC on mountain and hill farming in certain less-favoured areas,
  - welcoming the important new elements concerning European mountain regions stemming from the second cohesion report, especially those cases where policy measures are to be implemented from 2006,
  - having regard to the importance of the Council of Europe's proposed European charter of mountain regions and to the Alpine Convention and the protocols thereto,
  - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A5-0277/2001),
- A. whereas mountain regions account for about 30 % of the land area and about 20 % of the utilised agricultural area in the European Union; whereas in some Member States, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Austria, mountain regions account for over 50 % of the national territory and whereas some 30 million people live in mountain regions,

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 341, 9.11.1998, p. 369.

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- B. whereas European policy to promote hill and mountain farming must always be placed within the broader context of an overall European policy in support of mountain regions, bearing in mind that the different economic sectors interact to a high degree,
- C. whereas the problems affecting mountain regions often raise political issues of governance within the Union, given the importance of regional and local governance,
- D. whereas a single European definition of mountain regions is required, with a view to a more precise understanding and analysis of the problems of the population in mountain regions and with a view to special support,
- E. whereas the protection and promotion of sustainable development and farming in mountain regions is essential, because of their rich resources, which are vital for the whole of the Union; whereas this includes in particular protection of water resources, forests, rare plants and animals and habitats and the maintenance of recreational and leisure areas,
- F. whereas the mountain regions are characterised by great social and economic imbalances, including declining development and poor areas, and an exodus of the population, owing to the difficulties of movement or the inaccessibility of public services; whereas the farming population still accounts for a high proportion of the overall population in mountain regions,
- G. whereas the compensatory payments introduced by the EU under Directive 75/268/EEC have helped to reduce the exodus of the population from mountain regions and to halt the abandonment of farming,
- H. whereas farming in mountain regions, because of adverse topography, the often poor and less productive soils and the frequently harsh climate, is at a considerable disadvantage by comparison with farming in lowland areas and whereas compensation payments for these disadvantages will therefore be required in the long term if the desire is to maintain farming in mountain regions, because of its importance for the social structures, the economy and the environment,
- I. whereas the nature and intensity of agricultural use have a decisive influence on nature and the landscape and whereas non-intensively farmed land has a significant function as a habitat for plants and animals in mountain regions,
- J. whereas hill and mountain farming, which is extensive by nature, serves to safeguard water resources and protect them from pollution, thus helping to ensure that mountains themselves — a source of drinking-water — irrigation of meadows, and electricity generation remain in a balanced relationship,
- K. whereas mountain farmers make major contributions which are in the general interest when practising sustainable farming, in particular by:
- ensuring the sustainable conservation of the cultivated and natural landscapes and use of the high pastures,
  - ensuring the production of high-quality foods,
  - guarding against the dangers of natural disasters such as avalanches, mud-flows, rockfalls and floods,
  - protecting biodiversity, forests and water resources,
  - providing a minimum level of population and the basis for tourism, which in mountain regions, in particular, contributes considerably to added value, without farmers benefiting appropriately from it,
- L. whereas support for hill and mountain farms has a bearing on the stability and equilibrium of EU territory as a whole, especially from the hydrogeological point of view; whereas conservation of the natural environment and the rural world has to be assessed in overall terms; whereas, given the size of Community mountain regions, their equilibrium automatically becomes a matter of strategic importance from an environmental, economic, and social perspective and as regards the specific aim of providing continuity with the development of lowland areas,

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- M. whereas many mountain regions are economically dependent on tourism and whereas this sector offers a significant source of income for the population; whereas a sustainable livelihood may also be derived from the linking of mountain farming and tourism,
- N. whereas structural funding in mountain regions must be increased gradually, with due regard for the enlargement of the Union, so as to prevent the abandonment of small farms, especially family farms, and craft businesses in particular and the deterioration of environmental conditions,
- O. whereas diversification should be pursued in mountain regions in order to afford opportunities to carry on a range of occupations to help achieve a standard minimum income and foster a systematic approach to the mountain economy,
- P. whereas the Community's agricultural policy, as far as mountain regions are concerned, must be embedded in a complete strategy for the sustainable development of mountain regions, which gives priority to farming's function in environmental protection and its role for rural development,
- Q. whereas this strategy requires an interregional and cross-border approach and coordination with the Member States concerned; whereas economic and social adjustment and accompanying measures at national and European level are required so that the existence of farmers and their holdings in mountain regions is not put at risk by the exclusive application of economic yardsticks,
- R. whereas economic factors are crucial for maintaining farms in mountain regions; whereas mountain farmers increasingly see themselves as entrepreneurs and managers who distinguish clearly between land of high agronomic value and difficult, less productive areas which can be cultivated only on environmental grounds and with financial support from society,
- S. whereas the aspect of quality production and organic farming must be a particular focus in agriculture and EU support for mountain regions, as protected origin labelling offers comparative advantages as far as mountain regions are concerned,
- T. whereas farming in mountain regions of the Union, in view of its role in protecting the environment and preserving the landscape and soil, should be supported more strongly, in particular through an increase in the short term in compensatory payments under the EAGGF,
- U. whereas small and medium-sized farms are capable of fulfilling multifunctional tasks and can act as a counterbalance to the trend towards intensification as a result of the globalisation of world markets,
- V. whereas since 1991 the Leader and Interreg programmes have co-financed a number of projects, in particular in mountain regions, and have made clear the Community's role in providing support for mountain regions,
- W. whereas biological and cultural diversity are closely linked in mountain regions and whereas such regions are often the home of traditional and historic minorities who have developed a specific culture, language and customs,
- X. having regard to energy requirements, which fluctuate greatly depending on the altitude, the season and, in part, tourism and are spread over a very wide area and having regard to the local availability of renewable sources of energy in mountain regions,
- Y. whereas the marginal position of hill and mountain farms isolates them and prevents them from benefiting from the opportunities in the form of support and incentives granted by the Community to farms in general, thus creating a spiral whereby farms in the most disadvantaged areas have the greatest difficulties in utilising the public subsidies and aids intended to help them,
- Z. whereas the programmes to promote the development of less favoured agricultural areas, for example Leader+, must go hand in hand with horizontal policies affording much easier access for hill and mountain farms to Community measures and subsidies, in particular by extending the lump-sum payment system,

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AA. whereas, in addition, it is essential to alleviate the social difficulties facing hill and mountain farms, especially those run by young farmers or women, who are now having to contend with swingeing cutbacks in the system of social services normally available to lowland farms (for example children's schooling, training opportunities, access to the Internet, etc.),

1. Calls on the Commission to submit a communication to the Council and the European Parliament in 2001, which sets out the EU's position and actions in relation to 2002: International Year of Mountains, proclaimed by the United Nations;

2. Calls on the Commission, taking enlargement into account, to develop a complete EU plan for sustainable development of the Union's mountain regions and those of the candidate countries which includes safeguards for agriculture; this strategy should involve in particular cross-border cooperation in the mountain regions (Alps, Pyrenees, Carpathians, Balkans, etc.) and lay down specific measures under Interreg, PHARE, TACIS and Sapard which include the candidate countries and the adjacent regions in the measures for mountain regions;

3. Considers research by the Commission into European mountain regions to be crucial as a way of promoting a common classification of mountain regions in Europe, of prompting discussions regarding the implications of climate change and of encouraging the issue of a label (consistent with relevant EU legislation) designating products from mountain regions;

4. Calls on the Commission to lay down an exact definition based on the criteria of height (in metres), slope, shortened growing seasons, and appropriate combinations of those criteria so as to ensure that mountain regions and other less favoured regions can be differentiated clearly, on account of the differences in the problems, when drawing up development strategies and support mechanisms;

5. Emphasises that it is essential to compensate for the permanent natural disadvantages by means of compensatory payments; considers that such compensatory payments must therefore remain the key element in policy for mountain regions and diversification using various compensatory payments must be continued; special support mechanisms should be available for natural animal husbandry methods and organic farming; an integrated support plan should also be developed for farming, forestry and tourism (farm holidays) in mountain regions because of their complementary and, in part, inter-dependent functions;

6. Advocates a gradual shift in EU funding resources for agriculture towards the second pillar of agricultural policy (development of rural areas) in particular in order to strengthen the environmental and conservation functions of agriculture as far as funding is concerned, and to take particular account of the multifunctional character of farming in environmentally sensitive areas such as mountain regions;

7. Insists that in addition to the second pillar, the economy in less favoured areas requires additional support from the Structural Funds with particular emphasis on transport, telecommunications and business development support for enterprises not directly linked to farming and tourism; considers moreover, that the development priorities include the need for such areas to be progressively equipped with essential minimum infrastructure and services, not only education, health and transport but also those relating to the new communication and information technologies;

8. Rejects a general removal of the milk quota system for the mountain regions as milk production in the mountain regions and less favoured areas is not a purely economic factor; rather, the small-scale cattle holdings which predominate in the regions are needful for the care of the landscape and milk production also forms their main livelihood, with the processing of milk geared towards the production of high-quality local products;

9. Calls on the Commission to promote extensive forms of stockfarming such as suckler cow herds and the keeping of sheep and goats in mountain regions and to provide producers in mountain regions with the appropriate suckler cow, sheep and goat quotas;

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10. Calls for measures to protect bovine species which are typical of mountain regions and are an example of biodiversity and to benefit particularly significant agricultural sectors such as wine-growing, which play a major role in keeping mountainous areas viable;
11. Requests, as regards mountain wine-growers, given that high restructuring costs make it difficult to benefit from the support measures now in force, that a distinction be made between the costs of planting vineyards in lowland areas and on mountains on the one hand, and in hill areas on the other, bearing in mind that hill and mountain farming in no way lends itself to mechanisation;
12. Calls on the Commission, as part of its policy for the development of rural areas, to support collectively managed regional processing and marketing structures in mountain regions and the processing of high-quality products through initial funding; believes that the Commission should accordingly consider whether a stamp of origin and quality label might be awarded to high-quality mountain produce made and processed in clearly circumscribed named mountain regions, the aim being to enable PDO and PGI product gradings to apply across the board, bringing them into line and unifying them for that purpose;
13. Points out that the continuing strategy under Agenda 2000 of increasing competitiveness and the desired further liberalisation of agricultural production and greater orientation towards world markets will speed up structural change in agriculture, with its negative regional, environmental and social effects and aspects; calls on the Commission in the WTO negotiations to insist on recognition of the multifunctional character of European agriculture and for example the admissibility of support measures for conservation of the environment and the long-term regional development opportunities in less favoured regions;
14. Advocates the conclusion of regional conventions (including in connection with cross-border cooperation), along the lines of the Alpine Convention, so as to establish and speed up the cooperation in solving specific regional and cross-border problems and thus to give a practical example for realisation of the idea of a Europe of the regions;
15. Also advocates the development of policies enabling the eligibility of high- and mid-mountain areas to be incorporated into Europe's structural policies by conferring special status on registered designations of origin such as labels and any agricultural grouping whose production is of proven quality, and by regarding them as administrative entities;
16. Calls on the Commission, with regard to 2002: International Year of Mountains and in preparation for its comprehensive strategy, to update the information on mountain regions;
17. In relation to this comprehensive strategy, asks the Commission to review the definition of less favoured regions, not only in relation to altitude, climate and soil conditions but also in relation to population density and trends, age structure and potential for the development of commercial activity;
18. Considers that, building on the studies in the EU's fifth framework programme for research and technological development, the support for specific mountain agricultural research must be continued in the sixth framework programme, on a practical basis and related to specific areas, including the definition and review of agricultural policy objectives and measures; considers that the results should be disseminated systematically and used in training and advisory services in mountain farming;
19. Stresses the need to promote equal opportunities for men and women and to make available appropriate training and further training programmes for young farmers so as to ensure sustainable operation of farms and to increase the commercial efficiency of the holdings;
20. Points out that agriculture in the mountain regions of the candidate countries, because of the natural disadvantages, is clearly less competitive than agriculture in these countries in general; calls on the Commission to review the objectives and funding of the pre-accession programmes for the candidate countries (Sapard) with regard to agriculture in the mountain regions of these countries; calls on the Commission also, in relation to the mountain regions, to develop a logical plan for structural support for the forthcoming mid-term review at the end of 2003 and the period after 2006, which takes account of enlargement;

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21. Considers that for mountain regions which would receive less EU structural funding than previously as a result of the more intense competition for assistance resulting from enlargement, national and regional compensatory measures must be adopted for holdings and, possibly, exemption provisions from EU legislation on State aids for enterprises;
22. In view of the depopulation and emigration problems affecting mountain areas, calls for the implementation of immigrant reabsorption policies which are viable from the socio-economic point of view;
23. Considers that competition policy (with particular reference to restrictions on State aid) must take into account the special nature of the mountain economy, and that this should apply to the tourism sector as well;
24. Stresses that the local transport networks and in particular the access roads and tracks to farms, pastures and woodland in mountain regions must be substantially strengthened, with due regard for the principles of sustainability, so that these regions can be safeguarded as living communities and natural and economic areas; believes that the Commission, in agreement with the Member States, should therefore undertake to provide structural aid for the construction of lifts and similar apparatus, since this would be a structural investment that could promote the overall development of mountain regions on an across-the-board basis in accordance with the principle that all mountain regions should be multifunctional;
25. Calls on the Commission, in mountain regions which suffer from the heavy and environmentally harmful volume of transit traffic in particular, to support planning and structural measures which are geared towards shifting transport services in passenger and goods transport towards more environmentally acceptable means of transport and intermodal transport systems;
26. Stresses that sustainable development of the tourism industry, based on the quality of services and what is available, can make a crucial contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage and the economic power of mountain regions and calls on the Commission, therefore, to encourage farmers to share in the added value from tourism in mountain regions, by giving greater support to tourism options available through farms;
27. Points out that local marketing of typical local mountain farm products and tourism produce benefits; considers that with the hygiene standards required by the EU the short transport distances guarantee higher quality and, ideally, production, processing and marketing of agricultural products will take place at one location; considers that so as to achieve such efficient and sustainable economic structures in mountain regions — for example farmers' markets, farm holidays, farm shops — simple framework conditions must be created under regional control so that systems which are as unbureaucratic and practical as possible can be established;
28. Stresses that Europe's mountain regions will be able to find their niche in the global tourism market only on the basis of their characteristic combination of local culture and typical local farming systems;
29. Advocates that priority support should be given to craft industries, trade, business and services in mountain regions under EU programmes for support for small and medium-sized businesses and under the EU programme for rural development, in order to improve the local population's living conditions;
30. Calls on the Commission, in the overall strategy for mountain regions, to make provision for special support mechanisms for the preferential use of renewable sources of energy in mountain regions under environmentally and agriculturally acceptable conditions, in particular the rational use of water resources and wood from sustainable mountain forestry;
31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission and the countries with which negotiations for EU accession are being conducted.
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