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Agricultural Situation

European Parliament Agriculture Committee comments on Draft Constitution

2003

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Report Highlights:

In July 2003, the European Convention completed its "Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe". On September 11, 2003, the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development published its comments on the articles relating to the Common Agricultural Policy in the Draft Treaty.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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[E2]

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON DRAFT CONSTITUTION

Intro

At the Laeken Summit in December 2001, the European Council convened the European Convention on the Future of Europe. The Convention was asked to propose a new legal framework for the EU aimed primarily at improving the structure of the EU's institutions post enlargement. Sixteen months later, on July 10, 2003, the European Convention completed its "Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe" (published in Official Journal C169). EU leaders have welcomed the document as a good basis for negotiations and instructed the Italian Presidency to organize an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which will start on October 4, 2003. The aim of the IGC is to reach agreement on a final version of the Constitution and to formally sign it as soon as possible after May 2004 (accession date). The new Treaty will enter into force once the 25 EU member states have ratified it.

Agriculture

On September 11, 2003, the European Parliament (EP) Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development published its comments on the articles relating to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the draft Treaty. The EP Ag Committee welcomes the extension of the co-decision procedure to CAP programs and the elimination of the distinction between compulsory (CAP market measures) and non-compulsory (rural development) expenditure in the EU's agriculture budget. Currently, the EP has co-decision only for certain agricultural issues such as food safety and can only make changes to non-compulsory budget lines. The proposed changes would greatly increase the EP's power in agricultural decision-making. However, the Council of Ministers would still have the final say in specific CAP matters such as the fixing of prices, levies, aid and quantitative limitations. (Critics have already indicated that the move from the consultation procedure to the co-decision procedure, which requires two Council and EP readings, will very likely result in considerable delays.)

In its comments, the EP Ag Committee suggests to update the objectives of the CAP in the final Treaty reflecting the recent developments in CAP Reform. The objectives in the draft Treaty are the same as in the original EC Treaty and do not take account of new orientations set out in the CAP Reform such as multi-functional, environment-friendly and quality-oriented agriculture. The Committee also asks to integrate matters, which under the draft Constitution are the subject of Council decisions and regulations, into the co-decision procedure and to reintroduce consultation of the European Social Committee in CAP decision-making. The Committee also indicates that there should be a more flexible procedure than the formal revision of the Constitution, to extend the list of products covered by the CAP and suggests to immediately include salt produced by traditional methods.

Links

- The Draft Treaty can be downloaded from the Internet at <http://european-convention.eu.int/>
- Official Journal C169: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2003/c_169/c_16920030718en00010105.pdf
- Information on the EU's legislative process (incl. co-decision procedure): http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/about/abc/abc_21.html

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