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Enhancing rural development via organic farming

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Ilicali and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

Organic farming is enjoying growing interest throughout Europe, particularly as it favours environmental protection, food quality, animal welfare, conservation of resources and rural development.

Rural development has become a key issue of European agricultural policy, and an array of policies has been implemented to enhance economic development in rural areas, with the main objective of increasing income of rural households and reducing unemployment rates. Organic farming needs in most cases more labour per unit area and traditionally has evolved through small processing and marketing businesses often located in rural areas. In situation where the labour force in agriculture is still high and where it is desirable to have only a gradual decrease, measurable positive effects of organic farming on the number of jobs can be expected if organic markets are accessible for these farms.

Despite the growth in organic farming over the decade many Council of Europe member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe, have no specific regulations in this area and, where regulations exist, they are not harmonised at European level and size of the market for organic produce are still very limited.

Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should recommend the following priorities to its members in an attempt to reach the desirable level in organic farming and enhance rural development particularly in less developed regions;

Harmonising regulations on organic agriculture and agri-environmental policy with those of the EU;

Supporting organic farming in the context of multi-functional farming as part of a rural development policy catering for social and environmental needs;

Investigating the potential for tax credits and other means to support organic farming via the tax laws (eg pesticides tax, organic investment tax credits, reduced or zero VAT on organic foods);

Supporting the commercialisation of organic farming products by giving preferential treatment to producers that commercialise correctly certified products;

Developing organic supply chains;

Promoting the development of the food industry sector for organic produce;

Strengthening consumer-producer links;

Encouraging development of domestic (local and regional) markets;

Constituting a strong emphasis with respect to organic sector and policy development on interaction and partnership with stakeholders, both within the organic sector and related sectors such as tourism, and actors within the food system, rural development, health and education sectors;

Informing consumers and producers of the benefits of organic produce;

Improving links with researchers to provide a stronger scientific basis for standards.

*Signed*¹:

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group