



European Economic and Social Committee

NAT/218
Hops - extension of production
aid

Brussels, 11 December 2003

OPINION

of the European Economic and Social Committee

on the

**Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 1696/71 on the common
organisation of the market in hops**

COM(2003) 562 final - 2003/0216 (CNS)

On 7 October 2003 the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee under the third paragraph of Article 37(2) of the EC Treaty, on the:

Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 1696/71 on the common organisation of the market in hops
COM(2003) 562 final – 2003/0216 (CNS).

On 28 October 2003, the Committee Bureau instructed the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment to prepare the Committee's opinion on this matter.

In view of the urgency of the matter, at its 404th plenary session on 10 and 11 December 2003 (meeting of 11 December) the European Economic and Social Committee appointed **Mr Kienle** as rapporteur-general and unanimously adopted its opinion.

1. Introduction

1.1 Hops are now grown in eight of the EU Member States; traditionally this is a crop which is strongly geared to exports and the world market. A total of approximately 22,700 hectares are under hops cultivation, producing around 35,000 tonnes.

1.2 The total world production of hops amounts to 92,000 tonnes, nearly 40% of which is produced by the EU. Other major producers are the USA, China and the Czech Republic.

2. Gist of the Commission proposal

2.1 The Commission is proposing an extension to the arrangements for the 2004 harvest both for the common organisation of the hops market and the special measures relating to temporary set-aside and permanent grubbing-up. It has announced at the same time that it will present the future guidelines for the common organisation of the market in hops as of 2005 in a report with proposals for regulations.

3. General comments

3.1 The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the Commission's proposal of 25 September 2003 on the extension of the hops market organisation, including the special measures for the 2004 harvest.

4. Further comments

4.1 The Commission presented the report and guidelines for the future hops market organisation on 30 September 2003. The report's assessment of the current common organisation of the hops market is positive. The EESC feels that this reinforces the points made in its previous opinion on this subject, and is expecting that a reform – in line with the agricultural reform of 26 June

2003 (Luxembourg decisions) – will essentially be based on a partial decoupling, while maintaining the provision of aid and taking particular account of producer groups' views.

Brussels, 11 December 2003.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Roger Briesch

Patrick Venturini
