

Thursday 7 July 2011

Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union

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European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2011 on the Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union

(2013/C 33 E/21)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 27 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 of 22 October 2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) ⁽¹⁾ and to Commission Regulation (EC) No 983/2008 of 3 October 2008 adopting the plan allocating to the Member States resources to be charged to the 2009 budget year for the supply of food from intervention stocks for the benefit of the most deprived persons in the Community ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the amended Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1290/2005 and (EC) No 1234/2007, as regards distribution of food products to the most deprived persons in the Union (COM(2010)0486),
- having regard to the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in Case T-576/08,
- having regard to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 562/2011 of 10 June 2011 adopting the plan allocating to the Member States resources to be charged to the 2012 budget year for the supply of food from intervention stocks for the benefit of the most deprived persons in the European Union and derogating from certain provisions of Regulation (EU) No 807/2010 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its position of 26 March 2009 on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy and Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) as regards food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Community ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to Parliament's declaration of 4 April 2006 ⁽⁵⁾ on this scheme, to its resolution of 22 May 2008 ⁽⁶⁾, to its position of 26 March 2009 and to Commission proposal COM(2010)0486,
- having regard to Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems,
- having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the Commission estimates that 43 million people in the EU are at risk of food poverty,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 299, 16.11.2007, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 268, 9.10.2008, p. 3.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 152, 11.6.2011, p. 24.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 117E, 6.5.2010, p. 258.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 293 E, 2.12.2006, p. 170.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 279 E, 19.11.2009, p. 71.

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- B. whereas the economic and financial crisis and soaring food prices are putting more people at risk of food poverty,
- C. whereas the Commission estimates that 80 million people in the EU are at risk of poverty and that due to the financial and economic crisis the number of people affected by poverty could increase; whereas one of the five priorities of the EU 2020 Strategy is to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the European Union,
- D. whereas the Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union, set up in 1987 under the common agricultural policy (CAP), provides currently food aid for 13 million people suffering from poverty in 19 Member States and has distribution chains involving some 240 food banks and charities,
- E. whereas the EU intervention stocks have been reduced to a large extent,
- F. whereas the scheme increasingly relied on market purchases as a consequence of the reframing of the CAP, which had led to reduced levels of intervention stocks, the traditional source of supplies for the scheme,
- G. whereas the CJEU has ruled that Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 983/2008, dealing with additional purchases of food on the market, should be annulled,
- H. whereas following the CJEU ruling the Commission proposal for 2012 includes a sudden reduction in funding from EUR 500 million in 2011 to EUR 113 million in 2012,
- I. whereas the CAP and its related schemes and the Structural Funds, including the European Social Fund (ESF), will enter a new funding period in 2014,
1. Stresses that halting an existing and functioning aid scheme abruptly without prior notice or preparation has a major impact on the most vulnerable EU citizens and is not a reliable funding practice;
 2. Calls, therefore, on the Commission and Council to develop a transitional solution for the remaining years of the funding period (2012 and 2013) so as to avoid an immediate and sharp cutback in food aid as a result of the reduction in funding from EUR 500 million to EUR 113 million and ensure that people dependent on food aid do not suffer from food poverty;
 3. Calls on the Commission and the Council, therefore, to find a way of continuing the MDP scheme for the remaining years of the funding period (2012 and 2013) and the new funding period 2014 - 2020 on a legal basis that cannot be contested by the CJEU, maintaining the EUR 500 million annual financial ceiling so as to ensure that people dependent on food aid will not suffer from food poverty;
 4. Calls in the long term on all stakeholders to assess carefully the appropriateness of the food aid scheme, in particular as an element of the CAP, in the context of the new funding period as from 2014;

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5. Notes the announcement by Commissioner Ciolos on 29 June 2011 of the proposal to transfer the most deprived persons scheme away from the CAP, and notes that appropriate funding must be ensured;
 6. Recalls that programmes for deprived persons have to be implemented in the light of the proceedings before the Court of First Instance, as the Commission rightly pointed out in its statement of estimates for the budget year 2012; notes that the Court, in its Judgment T-576/08 of 13 April 2011, stated that only the supply of food from intervention stocks shall be covered by this programme, as opposed to causing expenditure by buying food supplies on the market; considers that, as a result of the Judgment, Article 2 of Regulation (EC) 983/2008 cannot be used as a legal basis for food distribution for the needy;
 7. Asks the Commission to propose a modification of the regulation for the most deprived persons scheme in order to find a solution to the current deadlock on this issue at Council level; considers that the most appropriate legal basis should be found for the next financial programming period;
 8. Stresses that the right to food is a basic and fundamental human right and is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economically-feasible access to suitable, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life; points out that poor nutrition has a negative influence on health;
 9. Underlines that high-quality and healthy nutrition is especially important for children and contributes towards satisfying their developmental and educational needs;
 10. Welcomes the initiative of the European Commission and of the agencies of the United Nations to put up a common front against food insecurity and malnutrition throughout the world;
 11. Stresses that farmers need to be guaranteed a decent and fair income and remuneration for their work; points out that farmers in many regions are struggling financially; urges the Commission to address the issue of rural poverty and collapse of rural communities;
 12. Believes that, in the context of enhancing food security and creating sustainable production and supply systems, minimising food waste remains crucial in the long term;
 13. Stresses the importance of providing aid at European level to the most vulnerable and deprived members of society, especially in light of the current economic, financial and social crisis;
 14. Recalls that one of the five objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy is the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union; stresses that in order to combat poverty, an integrated policy is needed linking decent incomes and working and living conditions and access to all fundamental rights: political, economic, social and cultural; considers that food-aid measures could be one element in a larger integrated policy to combat poverty; acknowledges that one side effect of poverty is often malnutrition and food poverty;
 15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
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