

Resolution passed by the Council of the National Farmers' Union (17 June 1971)

Caption: On 17 June 1971, the Council of the British National Farmers' Union passes a resolution calling for the British Government to obtain sufficient guarantees on agricultural matters during negotiations on the entry of the United Kingdom into the common market.

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The Council of the NFU, having received an up-to-date account of developments in the Common Market negotiations reached certain conclusions at its meeting today.

First, while recognising that some progress has been made in obtaining agreement on general principles, farmers and growers are inevitably going to be faced with continuing uncertainty about their future prospects if we join an enlarged EEC. This is because some of these agreements are couched in general rather than specific terms. It is imperative that before the terms are announced to Parliament and the country, the Government fully understands that continuing imprecision about a number of key issues will inevitably affect producers' attitudes. Accordingly, before the Union can express a view on the terms of the negotiations, the Government must give specific undertakings and assurances to the industry about the issues which have been brought to their attention by the Union and especially on those matters which will still lie essentially within the jurisdiction of HM Government.

Secondly, the arrangements agreed for horticultural products and especially for the quota items, do not meet the basic needs of this highly important sector of the industry. The prospects for many thousands of growers will be vitally affected by the use made of the safeguard provisions agreed with the Six to deal with market disruption and, above all, on the Government's readiness, if the UK joins the EEC, to make a determined effort as a full member to find a constructive solution to the problems of European structural surpluses.

Thirdly, as the Government has, from the outset accepted the common agricultural policy to the extent of its development so far, the prospects for British producers will depend to a large degree on the methods by which the principle of Community preference is applied to each of the relevant commodities.

On these and other matters the Government must give firm undertakings to consult with representatives of the Union both before and during the exploration of the issues in depth in Brussels.

Finally, Council, in endorsing the report of the meeting between COPA and the leaders of the three Farmers' Unions, underlines the need for the contacts between the farm organisations of the Six and all the other applicant countries to be strengthened during the period between the conclusion of the negotiations and the actual enlargement of the Community.