

Statement by Sicco Mansholt (Paris, 20 March 1953)

Caption: On 20 March 1953, at the European Conference on the Organisation of Agricultural Markets in Paris, the Dutch Minister for Agriculture gives an address on the issues surrounding the unification of the agricultural markets in Europe.

Source: Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam. NVV - J.G. van Wouwe 1945-1973. Stukken betreffende Europese en internationale organisaties. Stukken betr. de Nationale Commissie van advies voor de Europese Landbouwintegratie. 1952-1955, 105.

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Statement by Mr. Mansholt, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries for the Netherlands (Paris, 20 March 1953)

Mr. Chairman,

It has been with the utmost of interest that I listened to the intervention of the French Delegation and I am very grateful for their obvious wish to bridge the gap which existed between the two standpoints. I want to speak in the same spirit of cooperation.

The position of the Netherlands Government in this Conference has, I think, been abundantly clear. The Netherlands Government is anxious to contribute in a constructive and positive way to the unification of Europe and of its agricultural markets. I shall not refer to my previous statements now. I only want to stress very strongly at this stage, that it is in the first place on political grounds that my Government takes this position. From a purely economic and also from an agricultural point of view, a unified market in Europe will present difficulties to the Netherlands, but we believe that we have to take this risk. We do not see what other solution could be found for the political and structural difficulties with which Europe is faced.

You all know of the proposals for the political and economic unification of the Six my Government has made in Rome, and therefore you will understand that we attach the utmost importance to the supra-national approach, that is to the common responsibility. We are realistic enough to acknowledge the fact that the supra-national approach cannot and will not be accepted within the framework of the 17. This decision — a political one — cannot be arrived at here. Yet my Government is anxious to contribute in a positive way to the success of the work undertaken by the 17 on the organisation of the European agricultural markets.

It seems that on the one hand there is unanimity on the necessity that in any further studies to be undertaken by an interim body the institutional problems should have an important place. This, I think, is a positive result of our discussions and of the work undertaken so far. On the other hand, there is a desire to undertake further studies on the commodity per commodity basis. I believe this approach is a wrong one, and I have explained this on many occasions, during this Conference and before. The interdependence between agricultural production and commerce as regards the various products is such that I am certain that it will soon appear that it is impossible to set up organisations and to lay down rules as to a limited list of products. Further, the interdependence of agricultural production and the other sectors of economic life will, I fear, prove to be an insurmountable obstacle.

It seems to me that my Government would not contribute in a positive way to the further progress to be made in the fields of organising the European agricultural markets if I only continued pointing this out to the Conference and refused to consider any other approach.

Without moving from the point of view my Government has so far taken, I am therefore willing to agree to the setting up of an Interim Committee as a majority of this Conference seems to desire it, provided that

- 1) our common aim of the establishing of a common market for the wide field of European agriculture is clearly formulated,
- 2) the institutional problems are thoroughly studied with an eye on the interdependence of the whole field of European economy,
- 3) the study of special products implies the study of interdependence of those products with the other products and with the European economy as a whole,
- 4) the Committee reports back to the Conference within a certain period which we shall have to fix now.

This Interim Committee will have to work in close cooperation with the existing international organisations, in particular with O.E.E.C., and this for the very reason of the interrelationship between agriculture and the other sectors of economic life which has repeatedly been brought to the attention of this Conference.