

Statement by the Norwegian delegation on the agricultural problem (Luxembourg, 21 June 1971)

Caption: On 21 June 1971, as negotiations are held for Norway’s accession to the European Common Market, the Norwegian delegation calls for the adoption of special arrangements to solve the problems facing the country’s agriculture.


Source: Archives historiques de l'Union européenne, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Franco Maria Malfatti, FMM. Élargissement. Négociations pour l'adhésion des pays candidats, 05/01/1971-12/01/1972, FMM 47.

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The Ministerial Meeting in
Luxembourg 21 June 1971.

Statement on solutions to the agricultural problems in Norway

At the last Ministerial meeting between Norway and the Community in Brussels on 30 March this year, I emphasized that a satisfactory solution to the problems in agriculture and fisheries is a prerequisite for Norway's membership in an enlarged Community. Today I have the honour of presenting a Memorandum containing proposals for solutions to the Norwegian agricultural problem.

Norwegian agriculture will constitute a very small part of agriculture in an enlarged Community. It will only represent about one half per cent of the total agricultural production in such an enlarged Community. Norway imports very considerable quantities of agricultural products and Norwegian domestic production, which to a large extent is based on imported concentrates, covers somewhat less than 40 % of the caloric requirements of the Norwegian population. The entire consumption of sugar, bread, grain, citrus fruits, wine and tobacco is covered by imports. Our request for special arrangements covers only a limited range of products. Our problem should therefore be of small importance for an enlarged Community. For Norway however, a solution to the question is a matter of vital importance.

To a greater degree than is the case in agriculture within the Community, Norwegian agriculture is characterized by small farm units. There has been a marked decrease in the number of farms and in employment in agriculture, while, at the same time, efficiency has been considerably improved. The possibilities for effecting thoroughgoing structural changes are, however, limited, owing to the topographical conditions. In addition, agriculture constitutes the most important basis for settlements and economic activities in many regions with few alternative sources of employment.

In order to prevent extensive regions from becoming de-populated it is necessary to effect measures to counteract the decline in the population engaged in agriculture.

In the opinion of my Government the following are the reasons why the Norwegian agricultural problem must be solved by means of special arrangements:

Norway has a tough climate and the topographical conditions result in high production costs for many agricultural products. We have a short growing season and the alternatives among crops are limited. The conditions imposed by nature have determined the structure in Norwegian agriculture. Our farms are scattered and consist on the average of small freehold units.

It goes without saying that, since Norwegian agriculture is spread over an area covering a distance of about 2000 km., right up to the Arctic Ocean, and since the population density is only 11 persons per square kilometer it is necessary to apply a varied set of national support measures which are designed to ensure an adequate standard of living for the Norwegian farmer. This has only been achieved by means of comprehensive transfer of income in order to ensure that also these groups can benefit from the economic progress of the ^{Community} as a whole. The Norwegian Government considers it important that this income policy should be continued within an enlarged Community, and that this can take place in co-operation with the Norwegian agricultural organizations.

In addition, Norwegian agricultural production covers the needs in sectors where it is necessary to have a production in all parts of the country. This is first and foremost the case as far as the main livestock products and above all milk production are concerned. In order to ensure stable supplies of such products throughout the year it is necessary to maintain production at a certain level.

It is against this background that my Government requests that the justification for special arrangements for Norway in the agricultural sector be recognized.

Since the main problems are the result of conditions imposed by nature, they cannot be solved by means of transitional arrangements. On the contrary, solutions must be found on the basis of special lasting arrangements.

A comprehensive debate has taken place in Norway with regard to which solutions would be best suited for Norway as a member in an enlarged Community. The agricultural organizations have strongly recommended to the Government that Norway conducts its negotiations along the principle of protection of its agriculture from external competition with strict import regulations in conformity with the guidelines which characterize present Norwegian agricultural policy. My Government has, however, after due consideration, not found it possible to accede to the proposals made by the agricultural organizations. The Government seeks solutions which at the same time take care of the special Norwegian interest and are as much as possible in conformity with the common agricultural policy. It has come to the conclusion that a system of price supports gives the solution which can best meet these considerations. This solution makes it possible for Norway to accept the common agricultural market, the common price levels and the common protection against imports from third countries.

The special arrangements requested by the Government will comprise a limited range of agricultural products. It concerns the traditional livestock products, as well as grain, potatoes and the main horticultural products grown in Norway. For horticultural products in particular it is difficult to find a practical adaptation to a solution based on price support measures and for some of these products other solutions will have to be found. The Norwegian Government is ready to discuss this in more detail with the Community authorities, and the Norwegian Delegation will in the near future present proposals for a solution to this particular question.

As far as other agricultural products are concerned, Norway is prepared, as mentioned before, to apply the common agricultural policy without reservations.

In view of the long distances involved and districts far removed from market centres, it will no doubt be readily understood that, in addition to the general solutions, we should have the opportunity of continuing to apply special measures for the benefit of remote and unfavourably situated regions.

The arrangements proposed by the Norwegian Government for agricultural products imply considerable ~~public~~ subsidies. Emphasis has been laid on finding a solution which, taking the special Norwegian conditions into account, nevertheless seeks as far as possible to be in conformity with the common agricultural policy. The Norwegian Government therefore assumes that the solution proposed qualifies for contributions from the EEOGA to implement the Norwegian arrangements.