

## Address given by Martin Bangemann on the reform of the CAP (Berlin, 24 January 1991)

**Caption:** On 24 January 1991, Martin Bangemann, European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Industrial Affairs, sets out the essential aim of the reform of the common agricultural policy and raises the question of the handling of the agricultural debate during the Uruguay Round negotiations.

**Source:** RAPID. The Press and Communication Service of the European Commission. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: European Commission, [05.09.08]. IP/91/56. Disponible sur <http://europa.eu/rapid/searchAction.do>.

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## Speech from Vice-president Martin Bangemann at the "Grüne Woche" (Berlin, 24 January 1991)

There is no question of sacrificing European farmers just for the sake of exporting a few more industrial goods - such an interpretation is quite wrong.

The objective is rather to ensure continued prosperity, which is an essential prerequisite of a just and socially balanced agricultural policy.

The common agricultural policy is not static: it cannot be managed in isolation, i.e. out of the context of our general economic and trade policy.

This is the reasoning behind our negotiations on agricultural matters in the Uruguay Round.

Our trading partners have made the common agricultural policy the overriding subject of these negotiations by launching a massive attack on its basic principles.

I think it unjust for the finger of guilt to be pointed solely at us: we are not the only sinners in matters of agriculture, although we are not without blame, either.

Compromise will be possible only if we return to our original course, i.e. concentrate on the elimination of measures which distort trade.

In order to achieve agreement in the GATT, the Community, after consulting the Member States, tabled an offer which, in view of the agricultural situation, appeared to be feasible and just about acceptable from a political, economic and social point of view.

I fear our trading partners came to Brussels expecting too much as regards possible Community concessions on agricultural policy. On the other hand we must not insist on maintaining the status quo. We must reform our policy without pressure from our trading partners. Now we have won the time to do that.

There are signs that the GATT members are willing to return to the negotiating table. We shall insist on global negotiations taking all sectors into account, and try to avoid agriculture being isolated.

However, irrespective of the GATT and of external pressure, reform of the European agricultural policy is unavoidable. Mounting stocks of cereals, meat and milk products and increasing budget costs are a sharp reminder of this.

A new factor in the agricultural debate is our further progress towards the completion of the internal market, regulations which are essential to safeguard health, inform the consumer and monitor operations. This is how the internal market for foodstuffs and agricultural products will be achieved.

The consumer can rest assured that only goods which conform with the regulations will reach the shops.

This will ensure higher quality, thus providing farmers with adequate prices and a higher income.

The internal market is to everyone's benefit: consumers' and producers' alike. However, it will not eliminate the fundamental problems of our agricultural policy. What were the deficits of the sixties are now the surpluses of today.

In spite of the enormous changes in agriculture, accompanied by great social sacrifice, and the increase in public spending, there has been no real increase in farm incomes.

In my opinion we must do our utmost to escape from the surplus situation. It has a negative effect on farm prices and incomes and is detrimental to our trade relations.

Furthermore public opinion will not tolerate surpluses, especially when it is convinced that some of them also place a heavy burden on the environment.

The European Commission is working on the reform of the common agricultural policy: the main objective must be to encourage efficient family farming and to cushion any adverse social impact during the transitional period.

I call upon European farmers to make a constructive contribution to the debate. A satisfactory solution will require a broad consensus.

The course of agriculture must be changed: emphasis must be switched from quantity to quality and environmental friendly production methods. The best things in life are not free: healthy products have their price. It is essential for us to ensure that producers also benefit from this: that is the main objective of agricultural reform.

[...]