

Doc. GA18/EC17/REC54/01

**THE EIGHTEENTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY
RECOMMENDATION 54/2001*
ON “PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT”**

1. **The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation** acknowledges the particular importance of agriculture (including forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) in terms of its food security, raw material and ecological balance functions and its socio-political significance for the rural areas and the society as a whole. Agriculture is the cornerstone of rural development.
2. The agricultural and rural sectors of the BSEC countries are undergoing fundamental changes due to: the transition process; the imperative of sustainable models of development as defined in the Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro 1992); the EU accession requirements; the pressures of urbanisation, globalisation and trade liberalisation.
3. The Assembly is aware that Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) policies are vital to the future of the BSEC countries as agriculture employs a great many people and contributes to the national economy in a proportion well in excess of agricultural activities in the rest European countries.
4. The BSEC region presents great potential in the agricultural sector but the reconstructing efforts currently under way, lacking in capital and in consistency, have undermined that potential. Intensive production methods in agriculture bear social and ecological consequences (soil erosion, biological impoverishment, and pollution) that jeopardise the well living of the rural population and the sustainability of economic development in the BSEC region.
5. Therefore, the PABSEC is convinced that sustainable agriculture in the BSEC region must be stimulated by giving rural development impetus based on a new legal and political framework. The Assembly is engaged in seeking means of revitalising rural areas, which, while preserving their rural environment and resources, need to be developed in a way that ensures the well-being of their populations. Agricultural and development policies must undergo further radical change in order to meet the increasingly acute necessity of food security, protecting the environment, maintaining family farming and preserving a living countryside.
6. The adoption of the PABSEC Recommendation 49/2001 on ‘*Black Sea Environmental Protection*’ is a significant step towards intensifying common efforts by the National Parliaments for the elaboration of environmental policies that support sustainable agriculture and rural development.
7. The Assembly recognises the role of international bodies, particularly of the WTO, on the formulation of agricultural policies and welcomes the positive action taken by the EU,

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Assembly debate on 5 December 2001 (see Doc. GA18/EC17/REP/01, Report of the Economic, Commercial, Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee on “PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT”, discussed in Kyiv on 12 September 2001; Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr CHERNYAK, (Ukraine).

Text adopted by the 18th General Assembly in Sofia, on 5 December 2001

international financial institutions and a large number of NGOs in favour of sustainable rural development.

8. The Assembly appreciates the initiatives of the Organisation of the BSEC, particularly its collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and welcomes the projects of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank in the food sector in the region.

9. The rural areas of the BSEC region can fulfil their economic and social functions if they remain a self – reliant place to live with a good infrastructure; viable farming, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries; convenient accessibility for non-agricultural economic activities; a healthy environment and a well – tended landscape.

I. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore recommends the National Parliaments and the Governments of the BSEC Member States:

A. In the field of Legislation and Policy

i) *to implement* policies for the attainment of a competitive agricultural sector reducing state intervention while managing the ongoing liberalisation of the agrarian sector for the benefit of the rural population;

ii) *to foster* the emergence of an agricultural land market, inter alia by allocating clear and fair farmland ownership rights and establishing land registry systems;

iii) *to introduce* legal instruments in compliance with international requirements concerning environmental protection, food quality and safety standards, genetic resources, plant protection, fisheries and animal health;

iv) *to develop* transparent national legislation and policies in response to the international regulatory frameworks and the EU requirements -for those countries aspiring membership-;

v) *to support* the appropriate social and economic motivation, legal and financial incentives and an adequate institutional framework that would attract rural youth to farming and / or off-farming activities.

B. In the field of Farming and Natural Resources

i) *to introduce* appropriate policies and institutional structures with a view to informing and assisting farmers to confront the threat of land degradation and nutrient depletion;

ii) *to relieve* pressure on natural resources by investing in their improvement, rehabilitation and conservation so that they can be used intensively and safely and to maintain the living environment and biodiversity;

iii) *to improve* land and water management by:

a) pursuing policies for full and productive water use while preventing the depletion and pollution of watercourses, lakes and ponds;

b) introducing environmentally friendly farming methods to reduce erosion and encouraging alternative land uses (for production of renewable raw materials, recreation etc.);

c) supporting multi purpose forests land-use and taking appropriate measures for the development of the timber sector in forest areas where this sector is inadequate or deficient, taking into account the ecological dimensions;

C. In the field of Production Practices

i) *to discourage* the excessive use of input factors (synthetic fertilisers, toxic and energy intensive ones) which, although they increase yields, also endanger the environment, or pesticides and animal-raising methods which cause excessive concentration of manure;

ii) *to provide* incentives favouring the crops and animals which can be produced and processed in a sustainable way;

- iii) *to promote* the application of new technologies –and hence the research effort to generate them- in order to achieve production efficiency;
- iv) *to improve* the structures which provide the veterinary and phyto-sanitary control of the quality of the food and consumers protection by increasing the number of the laboratories and modernising the already functioning laboratories;
- v) *to enact* and *harmonise* legislation securing control over the distribution and use of genetically modified agricultural products.

D. In the field of Rural Development

- i) *to enhance* the administrative and financial role of the rural areas and their local authorities;
- ii) *to promote* alternative off-farm livelihood opportunities in rural areas such as food - processing and other industries in partnership with producers, eco-tourism etc., while paying particular attention to improving the marketing of agricultural, forestry and fishery products;
- iii) *to provide* rural areas with up-to date infrastructure networks that meet their needs and integrate rural regions into a modern transport and communication network compatible with the character and the environmental quality of the rural areas;
- iv) *to invest* in human capital development through expanding the delivery of education and training programs and improving health services and *to ensure* that management decisions reflect social consideration safeguarding the lifestyle of the countryside;

E. In the field of Rural Finance

- i) *to restructure* the rural banking sector, *to set up* or *strengthen* investment guarantee agencies and funds, *increase* favourable crediting and *encourage* monetary schemes of payment to intensify small and large-scale production;
- ii) *to encourage* favourable conditions for long-term capital investment in agriculture and facilitate start-up of joint ventures in the BSEC region giving priority to SMEs in the field of agro-industry;
- iii) *to make good use* of the funding opportunities and lending instruments provided by the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and other financial institutions;

F. In the field of Risk Mitigation

- i) *to improve* security against man made and natural disasters which highly affect the rural population and its well being. To that end to implement the *BSEC Agreement on Collaboration in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to Natural and Man-Made Disasters*;

G. In the field of Regional Cooperation

- i) *to ensure* implementation of relevant provisions on agriculture and sustainable development contained in the *BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future*;
- ii) *to promote* regional cooperation of a scientific, technical and political nature to safeguard rural environment and to foster transfrontier co-operation among rural areas in the BSEC region;
- iii) *to set up* a regional network of Chambers of Agriculture with a view to optimise services to farmers and producers;
- iv) *to speed up* the implementation of BSEC projects in the sector such as the creation of a data network on plant genetic resources; invest on pilot projects (demonstration farms); monitor the epidemiological situation of the BSEC countries;

v) *to simplify* the procedures on export and transit of agricultural products and *intensify* regional agricultural trade by applying flexible customs policies and by concluding agreements that facilitate access to regional and international markets;

vi) *to enhance* the policy debate within the BSEC and its Related Bodies in order to identify common priorities in the sector and strengthen the region's capacity to respond to the requirements of sustainable agriculture and rural development and ensure that the specific needs of the region, are adequately reflected in the international fora.

II. The Parliamentary Assembly invites the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC to consider this Recommendation.