

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development*

**2006/2293(INI)**

5.6.2007

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection  
(2006/2293(INI))

Draftsman: Neil Parish \*

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that soil is a shared resource, which, in many places, is non-renewable; stresses that, along with water, air and biodiversity, that do have specific Community legislation, soil, which is a crucial factor in the long-term, sustainable production of food, feed, fibres, and, increasingly, of biomass, has no such legislation;
2. Points out that human activity affects soil functions and use in various ways and that a Community strategy must therefore help to protect those pieces of farmable land that are under greatest threat, for example in connection with land use changes, contaminated industrial sites, soil sealing and erosion;
3. Is concerned at the consequences of soil degradation, whether natural or the result of human activity; stresses the need for a European strategy to identify and remedy the problems linked to the degradation of soils;
4. Points out that agriculture and forestry play a crucial role in maintaining soil quality and revitalising soil, and that it is in the interests of land owners to preserve soil quality; draws attention to the need to avoid the permanent sealing of soils of high ecological or productive value, and prevent them from being covered with artificial surfaces as a result of urban development and other infrastructure, especially those located in zones such as river plains, fertile farmland and coastal zones; calls for all public authorities from local to Community level to pay particular attention to the latter, which are under strong pressure from human activity;
5. Notes that soil degradation has local and regional causes and impact, and that occasional transboundary effects are caused by regional geomorphological factors and consequently require intergovernmental, rather than European, measures;
6. Points out, in this connection, that 14 Member States are affected by desertification and that, even if they are not actually affected, the remaining 13 are subject to regional or local environmental pressures such as erosion or salinisation;
7. Notes that soil degradation is not - as claimed by the Commission as an argument for adopting a framework instrument - a major cause, but rather primarily a consequence, of climate change; points out that soil differs from air and water, which are mobile resources and not tied to ownership;
8. Welcomes, therefore, the Commission communication on a thematic strategy for soil protection, following on from its 2002 communication on the subject (COM(2002)0179), and the proposal to adopt a framework directive on soil protection;
9. Firmly believes that the huge diversity in terms of types of soil (320, with numerous sub-types) necessitates, in addition to national bottom-up approaches, a European

strategy based on prevention, public awareness, information and the identification of risk areas to deal with this problem at European level; calls on Member States without soil protection legislation to shoulder their responsibilities for soil protection, taking also into account the responsibilities of owners; considers, in particular, that regional and local authorities should play a major part in formulating objectives and plans for soil protection;

10. Calls for tried and tested national approaches not to be called into question;
11. Points out that the proposed strategy, under which targets are to be set and penalty mechanisms laid down at national level, is unlikely - given that awareness of the problems of soil protection varies from one country to the next - to enable the Commission's objective of reducing distortion of competition to be achieved;
12. Criticises the wholly inadequate information on the financial cost implications of the proposal for a directive, and regrets the lack of information on national and European financing of the proposed protection measures;
13. Questions the Commission's estimates of the costs of the impact of soil degradation, which do not take account, among other things, of the positive impact of existing direct and indirect soil protection legislation or of positive contributions made by agriculture and forestry to stabilisation of soils;
14. Endorses the Commission's view that soil conditions need to be improved in many European regions, but believes that the Commission should make greater efforts to ensure consistency with current legislation;
15. Stresses the need to avoid overlapping, contradictions and inconsistencies in relation to existing EU rules;
16. Considers that the proposal for an EU framework directive will provide an incentive to improve existing and pending measures relating to soil, placing them within a coherent framework based on European rules that address the problem of soil degradation in Europe, while respecting the diversity of national situations and options;
17. Calls on the Commission to provide the initiative for, and to develop schemes to encourage, the transfer of know-how relating to best practice under national soil protection legislation;
18. Stresses that, in accordance with the principles of better lawmaking, an EU framework directive is fully justified given that the evaluation of existing EU legislation, which should first be supplemented, and of voluntary options based on the transfer of know-how still reveals gaps in soil protection;
19. Calls for new European rules to be considered, if still deemed necessary, only on the basis of such measures, and in that case to lay down binding standards for improvements; stresses that results already achieved at national level in the area of soil protection must be taken into account in this connection;

20. Considers that the thematic strategy needs to be strengthened in all Member States, and that much more dynamic progress will be made in implementing the strategy if it is complemented by financial aid measures financed from available budget appropriations for cohesion regions;
21. Proposes that an in-depth evaluation and analysis be carried out of directives already introduced in the European Union, such as the Groundwater Directive and the Nitrates Directive, and that the extent to which Member States are meeting the cross-compliance conditions applicable to farmers be evaluated and analysed; considers that, on the basis of this analysis, binding measures may, if necessary, be drawn up to promote soil quality; notes that it will also be possible, on the basis of this analysis, to carry out an exchange of information within the EU in order to promote soil quality.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Thematic strategy for soil protection
<b>Procedure number</b>	2006/2293
<b>Committee responsible</b>	ENVI
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	AGRI 14.12.2006
<b>Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary</b>	-
<b>Drafts(wo)man</b> Date appointed	Neil Parish 21.11.2006
<b>Previous drafts(wo)man</b>	Markus Pieper*
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	23.1.2007      7.5.2007      5.6.2007
<b>Date adopted</b>	5.6.2007
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:            18 -:            15 0:            -
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Vincenzo Aita, Peter Baco, Thijs Berman, Niels Busk, Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, Giuseppe Castiglione, Albert Deß, Gintaras Didžiokas, Carmen Fraga Estévez, Ioannis Gklavakis, Lutz Goepel, Bogdan Golik, Friedrich-Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf, Esther Herranz García, Heinz Kindermann, Véronique Mathieu, Mairead McGuinness, Rosa Miguélez Ramos, Neil Parish, Radu Podgorean, María Isabel Salinas García, Agnes Schierhuber, Willem Schuth, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Csaba Sándor Tabajdi, Marc Tarabella, Donato Tommaso Veraldi, Andrzej Tomasz Zapałowski
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfíl, Béla Glattfelder, Milan Horáček, Jan Mulder, Markus Pieper
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	Daniel Caspary, Christian Ehler
<b>Comments</b>	*The draftsman for opinion resigned as draftsman after the vote in committee. Therefore the Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development acts as draftsman.