

Brussels, October 17, 2011

OCTOBER 16: WORLD FOOD DAY
OCTOBER 17: WORLD DAY TO OVERCOME EXTREME POVERTY

***It is time to save the European programme of food aid
for 18 million beneficiaries!***

25 years ago, the European Commission presided by Jacques DELORS decided that, thru a tailor-made programme, agricultural food surpluses be given to deprived people in the countries in Europe that requested it. This programme is subject to very strict rules such as public markets purchasing rules, allocation processes, traceability, etc..., and contrasted sharply to the 'ancient' practices where food surpluses were thrown away or given to cattle.

Over time, this programme became insufficient, since the surpluses did not match the need of the increasing number of deprived persons. A budget was allocated to close the gap. This evolution has been challenged by countries such as Germany. Why? Because the additional budget is said to cover social expenditures and therefore falls under the competence of the respective European States and not of the E.U. The European Court of Justice, located in Luxemburg, rendered a ruling last April, that supported this position.

If nothing is done, the amount of food aid that will be provided to the people in need in 2012 will only be 113 million Euros instead of the 500 million planned. The Commission has not stood still and has proposed new legal rules abiding with the Luxemburg ruling, but maintaining the practical outcomes of the programme. However, a so-called "blocking minority" composed of six European States can enforce the Luxemburg ruling and thereby deprive several million European citizens of basic food supplies! And at the same time, there have never been so many activities aimed at reducing poverty!

Several Ministers of Agriculture, including Mrs Laruelle, Federal Minister of Agriculture, are working to convince their colleagues to accept a transitional regulation, while a new programme is defined. The European Parliament voted overwhelmingly last July with an 85% majority to continue the programme. And the European Parliament is the democratic expression of European citizens.

The European Federation of Food banks brings together the federations of some 20 European countries including more than 250 food banks, which distributed 359 960 tons of food products through 27660 charitable organizations in 2010; 51% of the produce came from the European program. 4.9 million deprived people are helped and most of these activities are performed by volunteers. Beyond the European food banks, there are other organizations everywhere in Europe who are as concerned as we are by the current situation and are acting accordingly.

The purpose of this press release is thus to desperately call upon the decision makers who can act to maintain an operational programme in order to help the far too large number of deprived people in Europe. This would constitute a great example of European solidarity and completely fit into the act of faith of the EU Commission President, Mr BARROSO, as expressed in Strasburg, last week, to the European parliament members.

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