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*Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development*

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**2010/0248(NLE)**

23.2.2011

## **DRAFT OPINION**

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on International Trade

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of an Agreement in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco concerning reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products, fish and fishery products, the replacement of Protocols 1, 2 and 3 and their Annexes and amendments to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part  
(15975/2010 – C7-0432/2010 – 2010/0248(NLE))

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The draft agreement will allow Morocco to immediately liberalise 45% of the value of imports from the European Union while the Community will liberalise 55% of its imports from Morocco. The agreement also provides for increased concessions in the fruit and vegetable sector, in which Moroccan products account for 80% of the EU's imports.

Any endorsement of such an agreement would subject the Community market to risks caused by potential negative economic repercussions on regions which specialise in vegetable cultivation. Given the serious market crisis affecting the fruit and vegetable sector, even modest quantities of products from third countries could lead to further instability.

Of particular concern is the Community system's ability to monitor and enforce time frames and tariff quotas, which are often ignored by Moroccan operators, as reported by a number of trade associations between 2009 and 2010.

Essentially, there is an objective imbalance in the tariff reductions agreed upon by the two parties.

High Community standards in environmental protection, working conditions, trade union protection, anti-dumping rules and food safety are not reciprocated in Moroccan products imported into the EU.

As far as environmental protection is concerned, there is strong discrimination against European products compared to Moroccan ones, in terms of sanitary and phytosanitary provisions.

The draft agreement does not settle the issues relating to geographical indications (GI), which have been postponed to future negotiations to be opened after the agreement enters into force.

The issue of the Western Sahara territories, with regard to which Parliament's legal services have been asked for an opinion, calls for careful assessment. Regardless of whether or not the territories can be included in the agreement, there continues to be a problem with human rights, which are systematically infringed. In order to protect such rights in full, the EU could consider using arguments of an economic and commercial nature, making the signing of such agreements subject to the genuine respect of human rights.

More specifically, the agreement highlights the already serious competitiveness problems caused by labour cost differentials between the EU and Morocco, the latter's food and agriculture policy being geared to development and to the export of large quantities of products.

Moreover, Community producers already have to deal with the substantial quota increases resulting from agreements with other Mediterranean countries.

European producers are penalised by the fact that Moroccan products, such as tomatoes, enter the Community market at different times compared to normal EU marketing periods; this has a serious impact on market development and, first and foremost, on price volatility.

Parliament should also be put in a position – as provided for in the Lisbon Treaty – to offer the Commission greater input, based on synergy, collaboration, problem sharing and exchange of good practices throughout the entire legislative process.

In this case, the agreement could be given greater balance by incorporating it into the reform of the entry price regime, by ironing out the sanitary, phytosanitary and environmental differences and by inserting the necessary social and anti-dumping clauses.

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to propose that Parliament refuse its consent to the conclusion of the agreement.