


Difficult beginnings

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In 1963, Sicco Mansholt put forward proposals for the organisation of a market in cereals. However, the plan for a common market in wheat put France and Germany in opposite camps. France demanded prices which it considered to be balanced but not too high so that it could sell a large quantity of its products to Germany. Bonn, however, opted for much higher prices, because the FRG wanted to protect the interests of its farmers whose output was less efficient. Ludwig Erhard, who succeeded Konrad Adenauer as Chancellor in 1963, withstood the pressure from France.

In 1964, several Council of Ministers meetings were unable to reach an agreement on the fixing of wheat prices. In September 1964, General de Gaulle wielded the big stick. He threatened to withdraw from the Community unless a solution for the organisation of a market in cereals was found quickly. In Germany, Ludwig Erhard was attacked from all sides. He was even subject to criticism from his own party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and from the former Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who criticised him for compromising European integration.

On 15 December 1964, the Council of Ministers eventually adopted prices slightly higher than those proposed by the Commission. In fact, despite everything, prices remained relatively low, and France was quite happy with the outcome.

The market in cereals entered into force on 1 July 1967. France was finally able to benefit from its dominant role as an exporter of cereal products, because it alone produced half of the cereals in the European Economic Community (EEC).