

## 'The Mansholt Plan' from La Giustizia (27 September 1960)

**Caption:** On 27 September 1960, the Italian newspaper La Giustizia criticises the provisions laid down by the Mansholt Plan with a view to organising the common agricultural policy (CAP) and expresses concern over the social repercussions of the new proposal for a common agricultural market.

**Source:** La Giustizia. 27.09.1960. Roma. "Il piano Mansholt", auteur:Prinzi, Daniele.

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## The Mansholt Plan

It has been a forgone conclusion, for as long as the Common Market has been discussed, that agriculture would create problems for the European Community programmes, and it should come as no surprise that the Mansholt Plan for a common agricultural policy for the six Member States (named after its author, Sicco Mansholt of the Netherlands, Commissioner for Agriculture) should meet with such perplexity.

All the more so because the Mansholt project, as is well known, not only proposes specific directives but also calls for the time frames set out in the Treaty of Rome to be reduced, just as the deadlines for other sectors of the common economy have been brought forward.

The project, already modified once and now presented in its final version, will be submitted for consideration to the EEC Council of Ministers by the end of the year, after assessment by the Parliamentary Assembly and a special Technical Committee. The Committee on Agriculture of the European Parliamentary Assembly has been meeting in Rome over the last few days specifically to prepare the motion on which the Assembly will have to decide next month.

It is also well known that the official Italian position, as expressed recently by Ambassador Cattani in Brussels, is that the Mansholt project is to be dominated by excessive dirigisme and has a bias towards self-sufficiency that is considered as dangerous in the context of Community relations with third countries.

We share these concerns only in part, above all because the proposals for a common agricultural policy raise doubts for another and more serious reason. We refer to the imbalance that these proposals present between the price and market directives suggested for some of the most important agricultural products of the Six, and the position taken favouring the harmonisation of agricultural policies and structural reorganisation.

In this respect, the Mansholt Plan can only be regarded with the greatest reservations by anyone who is aware of the inevitable structural and social consequences of an uncoordinated and unharmonised price and market policy, as a result of the changes that it will necessarily impose.

The Plan sees the levelling and structural adaptations of the agricultures of the Six as arising solely from the Common Market and the system of single prices for agricultural products. According to the Plan itself, this regime will plunge the weaker economies in particular into crisis by forcing them into hasty, ill-defined restructuring in order to align themselves with the methods and production costs of stronger and better-endowed economies.

It must certainly be recognised that if European agriculture is to be put on a sound footing it must be re-ordered and reorganised, starting with the restructuring of certain holdings whose productivity is now unacceptably low. Before condemning them to death, however, we need to have time to evaluate the economic and human upheavals that will be generated by destroying at one stroke, or nearly, certain productive systems and organisational structures that have often arisen as a result of unalterable natural environmental conditions or climate. We want to know beforehand, albeit in the broadest outline, what will be needed to restructure them.

Before establishing a single price regime based on production costs in the regions enjoying better natural conditions — as proposed by the Mansholt Plan — we think it is justified to ask ourselves first of all whether this is the most appropriate way under all circumstances and for all six countries to achieve a common agricultural policy. This is open to doubt. But once we embarked on this course of action — certainly the most drastic of those set out in the Treaty of Rome — what ought to have been done was to evaluate the consequences of the Plan and to map out any possible production alternatives and favourable economic and social restructuring that might ensue, as well as the periods that such profound structural changes may take in technical terms.

What will puzzle the reader of the voluminous Plan even more is, from this aspect as well, not only the reduction in the time frames within which such major and unspecified structural changes will have to take

place, but the lack of alignment between the deadlines. These have been brought forward to 1964 for the common market in beef and veal, but have been extended to 1970 for wine and to 1967 for cereals, sugar, fruit and vegetables and other products. It has been done without considering that the structural upheavals caused by the common market could perhaps be absorbed or mitigated only if they all take place over the same period, so that production decisions better suited to the environmental conditions can be reached in good time.

In a desire to arrive at the prerequisites for the European Community as quickly as possible, we would not want the most deprived social categories to be forced to pay the highest price.

Daniele Prinzi