

'A gruelling time in Brussels', from Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (21 January 1975)


Caption: On 21 January 1975, the German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung describes the complexity of the negotiations on the fixing of agricultural prices in Europe and emphasises the efforts made by the European Commission to propose a solution acceptable to all nine Member States.

Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Eick, Jürgen; Welter, Erich; Fack, Fritz Ullrich; Deschamps, Bruno; Fest, Joachim; Reißmüller, Johann Georg. 21.01.1975, Nr. 17. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Die Brüsseler Tortur", p. 1.

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A gruelling time in Brussels

kpk. Farm price negotiations have always been a gruelling time for Europe's Agriculture Ministers. But, this time round, the Ministers are being made to suffer even more than usual. Views on how steeply state support prices for agricultural products should rise for the financial year that is about to begin are as far apart as ever. Britain is, moreover, seeking substantial cuts in the intervention scheme for milk and beef and veal. France is fiercely opposed to such a move. But that is not all; restoration of the common agricultural price level, which is to say elimination of what are known as monetary compensatory amounts, is on the agenda. The arrangement at present is that conversion rates are maintained artificially for trade in the main agricultural products; those rates have now been overtaken by falling and rising currency rates.

The European Commission wishes to take a first step towards taking the Member States back to a common price level. The Benelux countries would fully abandon their agriculture's special status, while the Federal Republic would give it up in part. France, too, would be expected to make an initial adjustment. But this is firmly rejected by the Federal Republic — for the time being. And yet the Commission's proposal would be an almost ideal response to Germany's wish that prices should not rise too steeply (for reasons of economic stability); at the same time, the French would get the steeper increase that they have been seeking.

If the Germans hold stubbornly to their position, if the negotiations founder, then other solutions will have to be found. One such solution would be for individual Community countries again to set their own support prices. In this way, there would no longer be the same pressure to band together ever and again to agree new, uniform agricultural price increases. At all events, the common price level no longer exists 'de facto'; accordingly, it would just be a matter of letting go of a fiction. With the increases being sought already differing by more than 10 % (because of varying inflation rates), differences in excess of 20 % will have to be bridged in the not too distant future — a sheer impossibility. Admittedly, such an official 'renationalisation' of farm prices would be something of a makeshift solution, since it would make farming the only economic sector without a common market.