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GREECE - BULGARIA

Bilateral Relations and Prospects

An. PSYLOLIGNOU, Ministry of Agriculture

Directorate of Agricultural Policy and Documentation

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1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Greek-Bulgarian relations are without doubt very good, both at bilateral level and at international FORA in which the two countries participate.

Within this framework, Greece has played a leading role and from the outset offered her support for the signing of the European Agreement of the European Union with Bulgaria, and continues to show avid interest in the incorporation of Bulgaria into the European fabric.

A very major degree of Greek investment activity has developed in Bulgaria, with the result that Greece takes fifth place in the league table of direct foreign investment in Bulgaria.

Total capital invested amounts to eighty million dollars, which also includes the participation of Greek companies in Bulgarian privatisations, and it represents 10 % of the total of foreign capital invested in Bulgaria.

- * The institutional framework of bilateral Greek-Bulgarian cooperation is defined mainly by the following important agreements:
- * The Agreement on Economic, Industrial, and Scientific Technical Cooperation
- * The Long-Term Programme of Economic, Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation
- * The Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation on Income
- * The Agreement on the Mutual Protection and Promotion of Investments

2. COOPERATION IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR - DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE

Greek-Bulgarian relations in the agricultural sector are planned and conducted under the Agreement on Economic, Industrial and Scientific/Technical Cooperation, which was signed in Sofia on 25th November 1972 and ratified on the Greek side under Law 366/76.

The planning of actions and also the reviewing of the results from bipartite agricultural cooperation is carried out within the framework of the Meetings of the Joint Greek-Bulgarian Intergovernmental Committee on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.

Worthy of mention here is the fact that the current training programme was decided upon within the framework of the 18th Meeting of the above-mentioned Committee, which took place

in Sofia in May 1996. Of course, the two countries have been developing cooperation in the agricultural sector over a period of many years.

The fourth meeting of the Joint Greek-Bulgarian Working Party for cooperation in the agricultural sector had already taken place in Athens in March 1988 under the direction of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture. Within the framework of this meeting, a General Agreement on Economic, Technical and Scientific Cooperation in the Agricultural Sector was signed. This document was concerned with:

- * the sectors in which the two sides wished to develop cooperation, e.g. in plant and animal production, agricultural industries, forests and fish-farming
- * the methods of promoting the cooperation
- * the establishment of a joint group concerned with matters of agriculture
- * the possibility of signing partial agreements for each of the agricultural sectors.

In actual fact the provisions in this document have never been enacted, for reasons which concern both of the contracting parties.

After a period of détente, there began a re-enactivation of Greek-Bulgarian cooperation in the agricultural sector; this has been particularly apparent during the last three years and especially so in the wake of the fifth meeting of the Joint Working Party which took place in Sofia in April 1994.

It should be noted that in the relevant signed Protocol, the development of bipartite cooperation was envisaged, on the following matters:

- * production and trade of multiplicative material
- * trade of agricultural products
- * foundation of joint processing ventures
- * foundation of joint agricultural enterprises
- * irrigation systems
- * plant protection
- * agricultural research
- * exchange of genetic material, both plant and animal
- * animal feed
- * agriculture and livestock-rearing in mountain areas
- * veterinary science

In the three years which have intervened since then, we can observe that:

a. In Sofia in March 1996 a meeting took place between the Agricultural Academy of Bulgaria and the National Foundation for Agricultural Research (NFAR).

At this meeting, a Memorandum was signed on the basis of which the immediate cooperation in the sectors of Agricultural Science and Technology was defined; in addition, a table of common research programmes was drawn up for the two years from 1996-7.

The cooperation agreed upon is to be put into effect with:

- * the drawing up of joint research programmes and joint programmes of agricultural applications
- * the exchange of technical and scientific expertise
- * the exchange of information, data and raw materials
- * the exchange of experts and researchers
- * the organisation of short training seminars

The priorities jointly agreed upon, which concern scientific and technological cooperation, have mainly to do with the following:

- * environmental protection (pollution of soil and water by phytochemicals, fertilisers and heavy metals)
- * soil science and agro-ecology
- * genetic material, both plant and animal
- * integrated methods of plant protection
- * improved techniques and systems of irrigation and mechanisation
- * up-to-date methods and systems of animal health control
- * agricultural industries: improved methods of processing, quality control systems
- * hydroculture and fisheries
- * agricultural economics and agricultural development

b. A meeting took place in Athens in June 1994 between the Greek and Bulgarian services which are concerned with matters of plant protection.

At this meeting, matters concerning the organisation and function of the two services were discussed, with particular reference to:

- * phytosanitary control
- * farming predictions
- * agricultural chemicals
- * biological and integrated control

c. Also worthy of note is the cooperation which has developed between the veterinary services of the Ministries of Agriculture of the two countries. In particular reference should be made to the meeting which took place exactly 14 months ago, in January 1996, for the purpose of discussions on:

- * the coordination of resources for the control of exotic diseases and in particular foot-and-mouth disease and variola in sheep
- * the possibility of opening new border crossings and the organisation of border veterinary controls on animals and animal products
- * certain problems which exist concerning the transit of animals and animal products.

d. Finally, we should also mention the contacts and cooperation which have already begun between the National Tobacco Office of Bulgaria and the Greek National Tobacco Organisation.

We should also make reference here to the 6th Meeting of the Joint Greek-Bulgarian Working Party on Cooperation in the Agricultural sector, which was intended to take place last October in Greece, but which was however, postponed, literally at the last minute, at the behest of the Bulgarian side. We hope that the Working Party in question will meet soon and within the framework of such a meeting, decide upon the enactment of relevant, realistic and viable measures for cooperation, along with a schedule for their realisation.

3. COOPERATION IN THE FARMING SECTOR - PROSPECTS

The prospects for Greek-Bulgarian economic, technical and scientific cooperation in the farming sector appear to be promising.

In addition to the excellent relations between the two countries and the historic ties of friendship between the two nations, which are both factors contributing to such prospects, we should also add both the future accession of Bulgaria to the European Union and the fact that the two countries are immediate neighbours with common borders, which greatly facilitates cooperation.

Where the trade in farm products between the two states is concerned, we can observe that:

- * the main exports of Greek farm products to Bulgaria are those of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, tobacco, drinks and natural fibres for weaving, while on the other hand
- * the main exports of Bulgarian farm products to Greece are those of live animals and meat, fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, and wood.

The volume of trade exchange is adjudged to be quite adequate, but we consider it essential that efforts be made towards a further increase, both in the volume of trade and in the broadening of the range of the products traded.

The percentage of the share of farm products in the total of Greek exports to Bulgaria during the period 1988-1994 was as follows:

- 1988:	51 %
- 1989:	40 %
- 1990:	50 %
- 1991:	42 %
- 1992:	35 %
- 1993:	33 %

- 1994: 36 %

The corresponding percentage of the share of farm products in the total of Bulgarian exports to Greece during the same period was as follows:

- 1988: 24 %

- 1989: 29 %

- 1990: 25 %

- 1991: 23 %

- 1992: 25 %

- 1993: 21 %

- 1994: 17 %

The sectors in which we believe that there are excellent prospects for further broadening and promotion of the cooperation are:

- * plant multiplicative material
- * tobacco, and especially information on matters concerning the technique of the cultivation of, and know-how about, tobacco, as well as in the exchange of biological and genetic material
- * floriculture, with interest expressed on the part of the Association of Greek Floriculture Cooperatives in the development of trade cooperation with Bulgaria in the transport of farm products
- * in animal production, with interest expressed on the part of the Association of Greek Poultry Enterprises in the development of cooperation with Bulgaria, both in matters of trade and in egg and poultry production
- * in veterinary medicine
- * in the sector of forests, with the emphasis on cooperation on matters of protection of the forests in border areas, on multiplicative material for forestry, reforestation, poplar cultivation, as well as on hydronic works in mountainous regions
- * in agricultural research
- * in the training of women farmers
- * in the organisation of training programmes.

This is a large number of subjects requiring detailed discussion and treatment, and for this reason the postponed meeting of the Joint Working Party for Cooperation in the agricultural sector must take place soon; within its framework the Bulgarian delegation will be able to meet with representatives of the authorities and companies which are interested in developing trade and business cooperation with Bulgaria.