



GEOPA-COPA is the Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union. It is made up of the national member organisations of COPA that represent agricultural employers.

BACKGROUND

A Joint Consultative Committee on Social Problems of Agricultural Workers was created in 1963 by the European Commission in the framework of the CAP. Employers were represented in the Committee by delegates nominated by the national agricultural organisations belonging to COPA.

The Maastricht agreement on social policy (1992), confirmed by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) created a procedure to consult the social partners representing employers and workers at European level and conferred upon them real powers to negotiate collective labour agreements (articles 138 and 139 of the EC Treaty). As a consequence:

- **GEOPA, COPA's employers group, was created in 1993.** The composition of GEOPA and the way in which it is run are set out in its Rules of Procedure, which were approved by COPA. GEOPA's members are the national agricultural organisations that are members of COPA or authorised by COPA to become members of GEOPA, and which are entitled to negotiate collective agreements at national level. The European Commission recognises GEOPA as the body that represents employers in agriculture.
- **The Sectoral Dialogue Committee on Social Dialogue in Agriculture was created in 1999** to replace the Joint Consultative Committee. This Committee is made up of GEOPA-COPA and EFFAT, the European Federation of Agriculture Unions, which is a member of the European Trade Union Confederation. More than thirty social dialogue committees have also been set up in the various professional sectors of industry, trade and services. These committees are led by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

MISSION

GEOPA is authorised by COPA's statutes to represent the employers of agricultural workers to the EU authorities and agricultural worker organisations on everything pertaining to the promotion of employers' specific social interests. GEOPA determines its policies during the course of two or three annual meetings and at seminars. It holds debates in accordance with its Rules of Procedure and reports periodically to the COPA Praesidium. The COPA Praesidium may only refuse to endorse the decisions made by GEOPA if it goes beyond its specific mandate.

In accordance with the consultation procedure set up by the EC Treaty, GEOPA transmits to the Commission opinions on proposals for Regulations and Directives governing social policy. It may also forward the Commission resolutions adopted jointly with EFFAT.

In accordance with the negotiation procedure set up by the EC Treaty, GEOPA has signed three European recommendation agreements with EFFAT: the first, in 1997, on working conditions, the second, in 2002, on vocational training, and the third, in 2005, on the prevention of musculo-skeletal disorders. In 1999, GEOPA also took part in the negotiations conducted by UNICE-BusinessEurope to sign an intersectoral agreement on fixed-term contracts. Finally, GEOPA helps to prepare the tripartite social summit which precedes the Spring European Council.

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