Community's integrated rehabilitation programme for Kosovo where the financing of the repair and reconstruction of various water facilities, including a new pumping station at Gracanica is underway. Additional funds are earmarked for water projects especially in the area of Mitrovica. In addition a municipal development fund is planned, for the financing of local infrastructure projects, including water treatment.

The United Nations environment programme/United Nations centre for human settlements (habitat) (UNEP/UNHCS) Balkans task force has conducted a technical mission to assess the environmental situation in Kosovo and a full report is expected in September 1999. The Commission will examine the findings. It is, therefore, too early to say at this stage what intervention may be envisaged in the field of environment.

(1) Debates of the European Parliament (September 1999).

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-1504/99
by Camilo Nogueira Román (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(1 September 1999)

Subject: Customs duty on fishery products produced by EC-Argentinian joint enterprises since the expiry of the EU-Argentinian fisheries agreement

The expiry of the EU-Argentinian fisheries agreement in 1999 may lead to a spectacular increase in duty on imports of fishery products produced by the EC-Argentinian joint enterprises set up under the terms of the agreement. This may cause insoluble supply problems for the Community market and adversely affect a large number of enterprises and fishermen in Galicia. Customs duty on certain types of fish may increase by nearly 300% which would make it difficult to maintain trade relations between the EU and Argentina. Furthermore, there is no other economic sector in which there have been such dramatic increases in customs duty in such a short space of time.

For these reasons, can the Commission say what the prospects are for the imports of fishery products from ships belonging to EC-Argentinian joint enterprises? Was any provision made for adopting measures to prevent these increases in duty?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission
(8 October 1999)

The Honourable Member is asked to refer to the reply to question No IV.5 in the questionnaire presented by the Fisheries Committee in preparation for the hearing of the Commission Member responsible for Fisheries on 30 August 1999. This can be found at: http://www.europarl.eu.int/dg3/com/fr/answer.htm.

The expiry of the EU-Argentina Agreement in 1999 may entail a spectacular increase in the customs duties for imports of fisheries products produced by EU-Argentinian joint ventures constituted under that Agreement. What arrangements have been made for imports of fisheries products originating from vessels belonging to EU-Argentinian joint ventures? Are there any plans to adopt a method whereby possible increases in customs duties might be curbed?

As a result of the deterioration of the hake stocks in Argentinian waters and the measures adopted to redress that situation, we can expect a substantial reduction in imports of hake from joint venture sources in Argentina in 1999.

Tariff reductions were granted on an erga omnes basis to fisheries products of interest to Argentina in the context of the Fisheries Agreement and these concessions formed part of the overall balance of that Agreement.
The Agreement having expired on 24 May last, there is consequently no rationale for the continuation of the tariff concessions. In the context of the elaboration of a new fisheries relationship with Argentina, it may be opportune to reintroduce tariff concessions. To envisage unilateral concessions at this stage, however, would weaken the Community's negotiation strategy.

Next year, we will again take stock of the progress in talks with Argentina and of the market situation for the products in question.

(2000/C 203 E/004)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1506/99

by Jan Mulder (ELDR) to the Commission

(1 September 1999)

Subject: Application of Regulation 258/97 (novel foods and novel ingredients)

As the Commission will be aware, a number of products (including margarine, halvarine and cheese) to which stanols have been added to lower cholesterol levels have recently been placed on the market in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland under the trade name 'Benecol'. The manufacturer of these new products refers to the authorisation previously granted, and the marketing, in Finland of a margarine product also with added stanols, as a result of which, it claims, Regulation 258/97 (1) (novel foods and novel food ingredients) does not apply.

1. What is the content and scope of the Finnish authorisation of the original Benecol margarine product and does that authorisation relate to a product or an ingredient?

2. Is the composition of the product recently placed on the market in the abovementioned countries the same as that of the product which was marketed in Finland before Regulation 258/97 entered into force?

3. In assessing whether Regulation 258/97 applies to the original Benecol margarine product or the cholesterol-lowering ingredient, did the Commission have the abovementioned authorisation at its disposal and what information was included in the authorisation?

4. What quantitative criteria is the marketing of a given product required to meet in order for Regulation 258/97 not to apply because the product or ingredient has been used for human consumption 'to a significant degree' within the Community?

5. What qualitative criteria is a product required to meet in order that, by virtue of the previous marketing of a product, Regulation 258/97 does not apply to it?

6. Is this product required to have the same composition as the product which has been marketed 'to a significant degree' or may the composition be modified, and if so, to what extent?

7. May the ingredient occurring in the original product also be included in other products without Regulation 258/97 applying?

8. What criteria must be used in answering these questions?

9. Has the Commission investigated to what extent the margarine, halvarine and cheese products currently being placed on the market in the UK differ from the original margarine product? If not, what information on this matter does the Commission have at its disposal?

10. Has the Commission been asked — formally or informally — for an opinion on whether Regulation 258/97 does not apply to the new Benecol products? If so, what was this opinion and on what was it based?