the use of the drainage channel for waste water, while Elnosa continued to discharge mercury, without authorisation and in quantities over the legal limits. Spanish government departments such as the National Institute of Toxicology claim that the waste water from ENCE can be classified as toxic, and may be seriously affecting the environment, and departments of the University of Santiago believe that the mercury levels in the estuary's shellfish are above the recommended limits of 0.1 ppm.

Given that the complex cannot, in any case, make any economic or industrial projections beyond the year 2018, when the administrative concession of the shoreline land which it occupies runs out, and bearing in mind the much-suffering local population's opposition to the complex, does the Commission intend to take the requisite steps, having ascertained the economic, social and environmental damage caused and studied the problem in collaboration with the Galician and Spanish administrations, to have Elnosa relocated immediately and to negotiate the relocation of the ENCE installations to a suitable site, according to a strict timetable and in the near future?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission

(9 June 2000)

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it is not the Commission's responsibility to relocate companies. However, if it can be demonstrated that the installations in question have infringed Community environmental law, the Commission could take the necessary steps to ensure compliance. This could include initiation of the infringement proceedings provided for in Article 226 (ex Article 169) of the EC Treaty.

From the information provided by the Honourable Member, it appears that Directive 96/61/EC of 24 September 1996 concerning integrated pollution prevention and control (1) is not yet mandatorily applicable to the two installations, since the deadline for application of the Directive is October 2007. The case should therefore be studied with reference to the relevant Directives concerning discharges to water and emissions to air.

It should be noted that the Commission has already examined a complaint regarding the possible infringement by the installations in question of several Community Directives concerning air and water pollution. No evidence of infringement could be found and the case was closed at the end of 1999.

(1) OJ L 257, 10.10.1996.

(2001/C 72 E/038)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1278/00

by Eurig Wyn (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(11 April 2000)

Subject: Agriculture — flax and hemp

Is the Commission aware that, under its present proposals, between 60 and 80 % of the land on which flax is grown in the UK will not be eligible for aid? This would kill off the UK industry immediately.

And does the Commission accept that innovative markets have recently been developed for short-fibre crops, at a substantial investment cost to the industry, in several Member States, including Wales? If farmers cannot expand their production to supply these new outlets, this investment in rural areas will have been for nothing.

And, lastly, does the Commission accept that there is a blurring of lines between the markets for short-fibre and long-fibre crops, since long-fibre products also compete in the new products market, which means that a differentiated aid rate offers a competitive advantage to long-fibre producers in the same market?
Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(5 May 2000)

The question of eligible land is a general requirement of the arable crops regime that was introduced for environmental reasons as well as to keep production and budgetary expenses under control. As the flax and hemp reform proposal (1) is now being discussed in the Council, as well as in the Parliament and Economic and social committee, the final rules applicable for flax and hemp will depend on the outcome of those discussions.

As far as short fibres are concerned, the proposal does indeed support the development of new markets during a 5 year period through the straw processing aid. In fact, the Community finances do not allow for high subsidies to new products that would only find their market at a very low price. Thus, the right sign is given now to the sector: at the end of the transitional period, these productions will need to be economically viable with the common level of support for arable crops.

Concerning the differentiated aid rate between long and short flax fibres, the proposal takes account of the wide differences in product value and production costs between both products. Considering that long flax fibres used in the textile industry can easily reach prices several times higher than those for short fibres used for other outlets, it seems inappropriate to claim that both products compete in the same market.


(2001/C 72 E/039) WRITTEN QUESTION E-1283/00
by Bart Staes (Verts/ALE) to the Council

(27 April 2000)

Subject: Exporting waste to third countries/Basle Convention

Despite international conventions, there is an increase in exports of (toxic) waste to developing countries. The Basle Convention and regulation 259/93/EEC (1) regulate these cross-border flows of waste. According to UNEP, in 1989 the OECD countries exported one fifth of their waste. UN rapporteur Fatma-Zohra Ksentini says the countries which export most are Australia, the US and EU Member States the Netherlands, Germany and Britain. She is particularly concerned at the growing tendency to ship toxic waste to developing countries where it is simply dumped.

1. How does the European Union ensure compliance with the Basle Convention and regulation 259/93/EEC, in particular:
   (a) what service, and
   (b) how many officials are involved,
   (c) how many checks are carried out every year, and
   (d) where?

2. How much category 1 waste have the fifteen EU Member States exported to third countries since the Basle Convention and regulation 259/93/EEC entered into force (broken down by year, exporting Member States and countries of destination)?

3. How much category 2 waste have the fifteen EU Member States exported to third countries since the Basle Convention and regulation 259/93/EEC entered into force (broken down by year, exporting Member States and countries of destination)?